



Ebisu  
Yoshikazu



Breakdown Press





# Ebisu Yoshikazu

Television star, father of three, professional gambler, writer, cartoonist, pioneer. Since his debut in the legendary alt-manga magazine Garo in 1973, Ebisu has been spinning out surreal nightmares that combine the edgiest styles of Tokyo's artistic counterculture with the absurd and infuriating realities of work and life in the big city. A cult classic upon its publication in 1981, *The Pits of Hell* offers nine stories that established Ebisu as one of the leading figures of the ugly-but-amazing 'heta-uma' movement, the Japanese equivalent of punk and new wave. If you've ever wanted to sabotage a lecture about the Mughal Empire, control race boats through telekinesis, or rip your boss's head off with a crowbar, this is the book for you.

UK £14.99



9 781911 081081







**The Pits of Hell**  
Ebisu Yoshikazu



<b>Why Is This So Good?</b> Minami Shinbō	<b>VII</b>
<b>About These Comics</b> Ebisu Yoshikazu	<b>IX</b>
<b>Damn All Gamblers to the Pits of Hell</b> Ryan Holmberg	<b>XII</b>



Ebisu Yoshikazu's comics are familiar in a strange way. You'd realize why yourself soon enough, but it's because his comics are exactly like what we all see every night.

"Tempest of Love," for example. The kind of abacus classes that aspirational adult men are pressured to take as "the fast road to clerical work" aren't really like this, are they? Why does the main character have to hit his girlfriend? How does he know to go look for his monthly dues in the cracks of the concrete outside, and how is it that the money crackles up out of the ground like it was the most natural thing? Such doubts never even occur to the reader. We accept what happens immediately as a matter of course.

The view from the window of the high-rise down upon the boat races on the street below in "Salaryman in Hell." I know I have seen this view before, I know this isn't the first time. A Kintetsu train [which services the Osaka-Kyoto-Nara-Nagoya region] in Tokorozawa [a suburb of Tokyo in Saitama], I don't remember when or where, but I'm sure that has happened, just like I'm sure I've seen Kintetsu turn off the tracks and onto the street.

There are jerks in this world who just piss you off. Fight back as you may, nothing really will come of it. Get violent, someone dies, but surprisingly you're still not satisfied. I knew this a long time ago. Or at least that's how it feels.

Go to the ticket window, and you're bound to end up somewhere strange. Meanwhile, the hour of something is slowly creeping up on you. All of a sudden, someone you're sure wasn't there before is there now. You find yourself chatting with Sasakawa Ryōichi [businessman, politician, and financier of postwar boat racing] or Chairman Mao.

In other words, Ebisu Yoshikazu's comics are wonderfully detailed and realistic recreations of nightmares. And as is always the case with dreams, the line between the real and unreal gets confused along the way. But how that confusion works exactly is unclear. Then something decisive happens and you wake up, but you're not sure how that works either. The appeal of Ebisu Yoshikazu's comics lies in the fact that they are put together like our own frightening and familiar nightmares.

Ebisu Yoshikazu has come and removed the padlock on the shed where our nightmares are kept. Nightmares thus cross freely into daytime, and even follow us into our small studio apartments. Ebisu Yoshikazu likes peering in on and laughing at our nightmares as they hide in our dressers and behind our curtains. He is a dangerous person. Ebisu Yoshikazu knows nightmares well, and he is afraid of them. Precisely because he is afraid of them, he enjoys making them his pets far more than anyone else would.

Dreams are desires that went unfulfilled during the day. Ebisu Yoshikazu cannot be satisfied with the makeshift compromise of our desires being confined to



night. Who decided that the pleasure principle had to be controlled by the reality principle in our minds? That is what makes Ebisu Yoshikazu an artist. Artists are dreams of the waking world. Please don't get me wrong. I am not saying that comics are art or that they should be recognized as art. I have no use for such abstractions. Artists are dangerous people, plain and simple.

I'm not sure what's going on, but I know that it's interesting. There is nothing scarier than that, like there is nothing more interesting than something that you're not sure why it's interesting. What's interesting about Ebisu Yoshikazu's comics is that they are our dreams, our repressed desires, and that they allow us to be voyeurs on the strangeness of being human.

“Teachers Damned to the Pits of Hell” (*Jigoku ni ochita kyōshi domo*), *Jam* (March 1980): A teacher finally fights back against his students making an ass out of him. When his temper explodes, however, it results in such uncontrollable violence that he ends up killing one of them. Looking at this now, I can’t believe how bad the drawing is. I think the slogans hanging at the back of the classroom might have been inspired by the fact that copywriters like Itoi Shigesato were in the spotlight at the time. I was jumping on the bandwagon, in other words. The title I took from the movie *Courageous Men Damned to Hell* (*Jigoku ni ochita yūsha tachi*) [the Japanese title of Luchino Visconti’s *The Damned* (1969)].

“Fuck Off” (*Katte ni shiyagare*), *Garō* (April 1975): When I drew this, I was going to pachinko parlors regularly. I would scope out the machines the previous day and make a beeline for the one I wanted first thing the next morning. I won most of the time. The guy who appears in the second half of the manga is this intellectual type who is always hoping for bad things to happen to the family next door. He’s trying to get off on that, but they look happy so he says “fuck off” and goes to sleep. That’s why he has his dick out. I wanted to use this title [which is also the Japanese title of Godard’s *À bout de souffle*], and came up with the story afterwards.

“Workplace” (*Shigoto fūkei*), *Garō* (March 1974): After moving to Tokyo and getting a job at a sign shop, one of my senior coworkers was always yelling at me. I drew this work so that I could kill him through comics. I clearly spent an abnormal amount of time on the backgrounds, but looking at it now the drawing is just atrocious. It’s embarrassing how bad my draftsmanship was. I’m not sure what the ending is trying to say, though obviously I’m the one who drew it. The guy is surrounded by riot police, but there’s no way he can fight them off, so he’s going to have to try to kill them. But if he fights back, it’s him that’s going to die.

“Wiped Out Workers” (*Tsukareru shaintachi*), *Garō* (December 1975): This must have been from when I was twenty-seven or twenty-eight, while working at Duskin. Usually it’s salaried workers who are cast in the main roles, since they work harder than company presidents. But I decided to make this one about the president. Usually it’s the masses you see drawn in manga, but I often tried doing the opposite. No one seems to have given me credit for this, though. The president might be in charge of the company, but this story came out of imagining what he might do if his employees started making fun of him.

“Tempest of Love” (Ai no arashi), *Garō* (July 1976): This one was based on a dream. The dream took place in the garden of an abacus school at a Buddhist temple. I really liked magic tricks when I was a kid and spent a lot of time learning how to do them. There are magic tricks in this manga, too. I hate drawing sex scenes, but I included one here thinking that that was the popular thing to do. I didn’t do a very good job with that, however. I’d be happy if you would be kind enough to read this as a romance comic, about one man’s feelings of first love.

“ESP” (Chōnōryoku), *Garō* (August 1974): This work also has magic in it. The main character can control boat races by some kind of magic-like trick or spiritual power. The reason I drew so many salarymen, I suspect, was that I thought I could fill up the pages quickly by drawing the same-looking person over and over again. But the main character, you see, he’s different from the masses, I wanted to make that obvious. Everyone else wears the same suit and the same tie, they all look like they have the same face. That kind of social commentary is also in the manga.

“Late Night Party” (Shin’yanaka no paatei), *Manga Piranha* (June 1981): I went overboard with the joke here. I think things stop being interesting if you take them this far. Maybe this makes some people chuckle, but not me. It’s like, the work was twisted too much. Something feels really perverted about the underlying idea, that’s why I’m so embarrassed to go back and read it now.

“Battles without Honour and Humanity” (Jingi naki tatakai), *Garō* (May 1974): I was living on a shoestring around this time, making about 70,000 yen a month. Comics are more interesting if they have at least a little bit of real life in them. But this story is so chintzy it gives me goosepimples. None of the drawing is naturalistic, and the last line, where the boy says let’s kill them and eat them for dinner, is really embarrassing. If I were to draw this now, I might end with the parents being taken away by the police and the just the boy’s eyes in close-up with him saying, “Whaaat?!”

“Salaryman in Hell” (Jigoku no sarariiman), *Garō* (June 1981): I started drawing this one being totally amazed by how salarymen have to cram themselves into trains every day. A boy getting separated from his father like this is totally plausible. The salarymen of Tokyo travel to work in packed trains like this every day. It’s unbelievable. They’re already wiped out by the time they get to work. That’s what this comic is about. Probably the reason I took special care to draw the insects with so much detail is because I already knew this was going to be in this book before I sent it to *Garō*.

# ガロ

1993 4

1964年11月10日第3種郵便物認可  
1966年4月5日国鉄首都圏特別区承認第2343号  
1993年4月1日発行第30巻第3号通巻338号  
(毎月1日発行)

花輪和一  
とり・みき

近藤ようこ 唐沢商会  
森元暢之 友沢ミミヨ  
安彦麻理絵 土橋とし子  
久住昌之 沼田元氣  
四方田犬彦  
上野昂志

ガロ名作劇場14  
「リュウの帰る日」  
つげ忠男  
「長井勝一賞」発表

蛭子能収

巻頭カラー「地獄の金持」

インタビュー・ひとコマ傑作名場面集・エビス語録

湯村輝彦 安斎肇 巻上公一 末井昭  
根本敬 平口広美 スージー甘金

550yen

CARTOON: YOSHIKAZU EBISU PHOTO: HITOSHI IWAKU DESIGN: KENICHIRO HARAGUCHI

Garō (April 1993), with an Ebisu Yoshikazu cover and special feature



In 1998, Ebisu Yoshikazu was arrested for gambling. He was playing mahjong at a small parlor in Shinjuku. Nothing wrong with that. Only you are not allowed to play for money. Gambling is legal in Japan. But only at three state-sanctioned venues: horse tracks, bicycle tracks, and boat races. You can find all three in urban areas across Japan. Off the top of my head, I can think of six horse tracks, five bicycle tracks, and four boat stadiums in the greater Tokyo area alone.

Pachinko is an inexplicable exception. Technically, this ubiquitous pinball-like game does not count as gambling. Put money into the machine, out come small metal balls, load the balls en masse, shoot them in automatic succession (in Ebisu's day you had to flick them one by one) into variously shaped holes. The more balls you get in the holes, the more balls you get back. They are not redeemable on site for anything but smokes, snacks, bottled drinks, and sundry goods. But you can also convert them into tokens, and walk across the street to a hardboiled lady behind a thick window, who will legally exchange the tokens for cash. Cards and dice are taboo. Those are yakuza games. Mahjong is caught in between. It is pervasive, with more than 10,000 parlors nationwide at its height. In many places, it is not played for money. Even when it is (discreetly), the stakes are often low. Not only are there high school mahjong clubs, the game is even enjoyed by women!! But back in the '50s and '60s, it was also frequently portrayed in the movies as a favorite pastime of chain-smoking Chinese mafia. Some parlors have had yakuza connections, so they are patrolled by the police.

After being busted, Ebisu and his twelve co-arrestees were led to a police van with a rope around their necks and held overnight for questioning at the station without meals. It being his first offense, Ebisu had to pay 100,000 yen (about 800 USD). The fine in itself was not a hardship for Ebisu. By this point, he was not only well paid for his cartooning. He was what the Japanese call a "talent" (*tarento*), a television celebrity who specializes in variety shows, game shows, food tourism, and light comedy shows. It rarely looks like he is acting. As the chummy, easygoing, know-nothing, pudding pie uncle, he always appears to be playing himself. He has a terrific smile. His eyes smile, too. He literally has a funny face. He will happily make an ass out of himself, which increases his stock in the inane slapstick world of Japan's countless variety shows. When he was arrested, he was appearing regularly in twenty-two different television shows (including dramas), with cameos in others and adverts besides. Japanese celebrity being inordinately vulnerable against scandal, all twenty-two were summarily cancelled. His manga career, on the other hand, was unharmed. Having drawn mainly for subcultural venues like *Garō* and fly-by-night porn mags sold in vending machines, if anything his arrest boosted his reputation as the everyman with a dark side. Staring at zero savings after having just bought

NO GAMBLE,  
NO LIFE.



コスモの本

*No Gamble, No Life: This is How I've Lived My Life* (Cosmo Books, 2016)

a new house and with his main source of income gone, “I have never been more appreciative of the manga industry in my life,” he wrote in his autobiography.<sup>1</sup> “You, of all people, shouldn’t be in such places,” intimated a judge at a later hearing.<sup>2</sup> Ebisu took time to reflect on his sins by taking his wife and two kids to Las Vegas.

Within a few months, the “public embarrassment” was back on television. Though he kept his distance from mahjong, he continued gambling in permitted forms. “Job or no job, family or no family, the only constant in my life has been gambling.”<sup>3</sup> It is reportedly his only vice. He does not drink. He claims to never have had sexual relations with any women other than his two wives (the first passed away suddenly in 2001). “Even when I was single, I never went to *fūzoku*,” referring to Japan’s many-flavored sex industry. “Masturbation was my lone specialization.”<sup>4</sup> The day he graduated high school, traditionally a day for initiation in the wonders of womanhood via prostitution, he made a beeline to the nearest pachinko joint instead. He claims to have never chosen a job based on whether the content appealed to him or not, but only if it provided him enough time and money to gamble and draw comics. “I seriously want to ask people who don’t gamble, what happiness can you possibly get out of life?”<sup>5</sup> When he was a kid, he liked marbles and menko and other games in which winning and losing meant actually winning and losing something. He invented card games to swindle other kids out of candy. He even constructed his own mock pachinko machine out of plywood, nails, and BBs.<sup>6</sup>

His first published manga, “Pachinko” (August 1973), about a young married man with a newborn desperate to avoid domestic duties and his in-laws so that he can spend his day off at the parlor, was based on the artist’s daily life. His second published work, “The Age of Boat Races” (“*Kyōtei jidai*,” January 1974), also inspired by the artist’s life, is about a broke young gambler who suddenly finds himself in the driver’s seat of a boat speeding to his death. The first book collection of his work, which you hold in your hands – originally titled *Teachers Damned to the Pits of Hell* (*Jigoku ni ochita kyōshi domo*, July 1981) – was filled with stories of men whose very states of consciousness are heightened and warped by gambling. The updated edition of his autobiography, from which the present essay cribs heavily, is titled *No Gamble, No Life* (2016). He has written multiple books and countless articles about how gambling has been his school of life and how it could also be yours. He has written and overseen primers on mahjong, pachinko, and boat races (horses and bicycles are generally not his thing). He forswore mahjong after his arrest, but began appearing in celebrity matches on TV in the 2010s. He frequently does television commentary and forecasts for boat races. He estimates to have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars at tracks and parlors over the years. But his obsession has also increased his celebrity and helped make him a millionaire. In the long run, vice and crime has paid.

\*

Ebisu was born in 1947 as the youngest of three siblings. He was born on the Amakusa Islands, just off the coast of Kyushu in Kumamoto Prefecture. He moved north to Nagasaki when he was still an infant, and lived there until the age of twenty-

three. His father was a deep sea fisherman, and would be gone for a month or two at a time. He died in 1968, when Ebisu was twenty-one. His older brother also became a fisherman, and so also wasn't home much. His sister got a job in Nagoya after graduating middle school, and didn't return to Nagasaki until after getting married. For most of Ebisu's childhood, there were no men at home. For most of his teenage years and early twenties, it was just him and his mother.

He loved manga and drew a lot. Like many boys of his generation, he was especially fond of Tezuka Osamu's *Astroboy* (*Tetsuwan Atomu*) and Yokoyama Mitsuteru's *Gigantor* (*Tetsujin 28 gō*). When the first manga weeklies, *Shōnen Sunday* and *Shōnen Magazine*, were inaugurated in 1959, he read those too. Then he discovered rental "kashihon" manga. *The Shadow* (*Kage*), the kashihon mystery periodical that helped kick off the gekiga boom, was his favorite. He liked its "thick and sticky scenes of murder," and especially the work of Yamamori Susumu, one of only two members of Tatsumi Yoshihiro's Gekiga Studio who abandoned comics when the kashihon market tanked in the mid '60s. "After discovering *The Shadow*, I lost all interest in regular boys' comics. I borrowed and read nothing but kashihon manga after that."<sup>7</sup>

Middle school was pure misery. He was picked on daily. Unable to fight back, he acted out his frustrations at home by drawing comics in which bad guys were throttled and killed. He attributes the nasty group mentality and violent explosions of anger in his early published work to these years. High school, on the other hand, was a liberating joy, thanks in large part to the after-school art club. More than fine art, Ebisu was interested in illustration-based graphic design, particularly the work of Yokoo Tadanori, Awazu Kiyoshi, and Uno Akira. He especially liked Yokoo, and began thinking he would like to be a graphic designer like him. "Kamekura Yūsaku held total sway in those years," referring to the clean and respectable modernist who designed the official poster for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and later the 1970 World's Expo in Osaka. "He was the king of Japanese design until Yokoo Tadanori came along and toppled him with the exact opposite, with a style that laughed at everything.... Every last detail in Yokoo's posters are funny. I might have been influenced by that. Yokoo's laughter always seemed like it was directed at authority."<sup>8</sup>

With the end of high school approaching, Ebisu needed a job. He and his teacher looked for something in graphic design. The best they could find was an opening at a small sign shop. Thinking he might have a chance to paint pictures, he jumped at the opportunity. "But it was a sign shop, after all. That's a bit different from graphic design. Wait, I take that back. It's totally different."<sup>9</sup> "Summer Ochūgen Gift Sale," "End of Year Sale" . . . such were the phrases that he had to paint on banners, or mount on boards, then transport the finished signs to clients, install them, and later remove them. There was only one other employee, in addition to the owner. Bored and overworked, he played pachinko on his way home practically every day. On the upside, his lone coworker loved manga. He loved manga so much he created a manga-lover's club. The members pooled their resources to buy a wide range of manga periodicals and got together every month on a Sunday.<sup>10</sup>

Swept up in the sea change wrought by Pop design in the mid '60s, Ebisu had stopped reading manga in middle school. The decline and disappearance of



kashihon manga, Ebisu's preferred comics, was probably also a factor. But that changed with this club, especially after he was introduced to *Garō*. Tsuge Yoshiharu's "Nejishiki" (June 1968) knocked him off his feet. "It was like no manga I had ever read. While it was arty, there was also something strange and off about its worldview. The drawing had so much power that, if you cut up the panels, each of them could stand alone as a work of art." Dreams as source material, non-sequitur narrative and pictorial compositions, dark and absurdist sexual encounters – and specific motifs like trains going where they shouldn't ("Salaryman in Hell") – seem to be some of the things Ebisu adopted from Tsuge's work. "Ever since I encountered 'Nejishiki,' I have been drawing incoherent manga like I do now," he wrote in the '90s.<sup>11</sup> One of the words often used to describe Ebisu's work – "*fujōri*" (illogical, irrational, absurd) – was popularized in manga discourse by "Nejishiki." He was also fascinated with the inconsistent ugliness, wrought from intentionally wonky drawing, of the protagonist's face – which is worth noting given that bad trip surrealism and naïve/deskilled drawing would become an essential pairing, not just in Ebisu's career, but in Japanese subculture at large.

Tsuge Yoshiharu was not the only *Garō* artist Ebisu admired. "Whenever I read *Garō*, I always started with Abe Shin'ichi's work. He's really good, the way he does male-female dialogue, it's all super realistic, and sad, but not at all arty-farty."<sup>12</sup> The domestic chitchat and disputes in Ebisu's earliest published manga do indeed have an Abe-like pain and realism to them, though Abe never took interpersonal breakdowns to Ebisu's extremes. Some of Ebisu's backgrounds and figures – the house and hedges on page 66 in "Wiped Out Workers," for example, or the cityscape on page 84 – seem modeled on the loose brushwork and stumpy abstraction employed by Abe in stories like "Love" ("Ren'ai," February 1973). Easier to perceive, however, are elements of Hayashi Seiichi's surrealistic Pop, Tsuge Tadao's angsty men and loose pen work, and Akasegawa Genpei's tabular landscapes and political caricature. The male in-law of Ebisu's "Pachinko" looks like the killer of Hayashi's "Red Red Rock" ("Makkakka rokku," July 1969). The cityscape on page 44 in "Workplace" evokes the scratchy, photo-based landscapes of Tadao's work. The finale of "Workplace" almost reads like a cross between Tadao's "A Tale of Absolute and Utter Nonsense" ("Kōtōmukei tan," February 1972, which is also about revolting lumpen proles) and Akasegawa's riot police parodies in "Ozashiki" (June 1970, a "Nejishiki" parody) and *Sakura Illustrated* (*Sakura gahō*, 1970-71). Some of the buildings and wobbly line work in his earliest pieces have a distinct Sasaki Maki touch. Yamamori Susumu's slapstick action sequences and the bloody inkiness of kashihon mystery and hardboiled manga in general may also be part of Ebisu's otherwise *Garō*-thick DNA.<sup>13</sup>

One glance at his early work, however – especially the projecting boxes, whooshing rays, flapping tongues, kissing faces, and cutout contours of his title pages – and it is immediately apparent that the single greatest influence on Ebisu was Yokoo Tadanori, particularly the early, flat, frontal, circus graphics-inspired, Push Pin-esque Yokoo of the mid '60s, before he started relying heavily on photography, saturated fluorescents, and the aesthetics of 19th century Japanese woodcuts and lithography. Yokoo's covers and ribald interior illustration spreads for the magazine



Yokoo Tadanori, poster for Kurita Isamu's *The City and Design* (1965)

*Hanashi no tokushū* (Talk Special) from 1966 were surely known to Ebisu, as were his first posters for the underground theatre and dance scene in Tokyo. But if I had to choose one image from Yokoo's vast output as Ebisu's ground zero, it would be the poster supporting Kurita Isamu's book, *The City and Design* (*Toshi to dezain*, 1965). The kissers on the title page of "Tempest of Love" look to be direct imports from that iconic Yokoo image. If Yokoo's pinstriped suit keeps flying, he'll eventually end up in Ebisu's dystopian world, where he will spawn legions of cookie-cutter salarymen. Put a crowbar in the hand of the crinkly-faced man in a poster Yokoo designed for *Idea* magazine in 1969 using an Awazu head, and he'd be ready to fight alongside the disgruntled hero of "Workplace." That same manga character's face and the bath of blood remind me of Yokoo's many renditions of famed yakuza actor Takakura Ken circa 1969-71. All of these images were reproduced many times over as Yokoo's star skyrocketed in the late '60s. They were also easily available in a single package with the publication of *The Complete Works of Yokoo Tadanori* (*Yokoo Tadanori zenshū*) by



Yokoo Tadanori, poster for *Idea* magazine (1969)

Kōdansha in 1971. The UFOs, Mount Fujis, bullet trains, and other random details in Ebisu's backgrounds are also a Yokoo thing.<sup>14</sup>

Even before his *Garo* debut, Ebisu had experimented with crossing manga and design. This can be seen in *Man* (1970), a self-published comics anthology that he produced with his coworker at the sign shop and a friend from his former high school art club. Its full title, according to the spine, is *Mangahon*, a portmanteau combining “manga” with “gahon” (“picture book,” as in a collection of hand-drawn pictures, not children’s book). The cover is not by Ebisu, but it is significant in that it shows how cutting-edge graphic design was a common reference point among Ebisu’s comics-loving friends. With its nested and fragmented heads, it looks like a cross between Awazu Kiyoshi’s anti-Vietnam War posters and cover designs – most of which use similarly facially featureless but internally articulated heads – and Yokoo’s bug-vision cover design for the LP *Rearview Window of the Heart: The Complete Asaoka Ruriko* (*Kokoro no uramado: Asaoka Ruriko no subete*, 1970).





*Man* (self-published, 1970), cover by Tominaga Yoshihiro

As for the manga content, Ebisu's friends contributed works that suggest influence from *Garō* artists like Ikegami Ryōichi and the forgotten Hoshikawa Teppu. Among Ebisu's three contributions is an early version of "Teachers Damned to the Pits of Hell." With a title adapted from the Japanese title of Visconti's *The Damned* (1969), it uses practically the same breakdown and dialogue as the 1979 version translated in the present volume, though spread out over larger panels and more pages. The drawing suddenly springs into Pop and psychedelic designs – big block sound effects, for example, or stars and swirls upon the teacher's face – that are not in the later version. It may be my imagination, but I sense a bit of Hino Hideshi (who drew for *Garō* in the late '60s) in the way Ebisu rendered bodies and heads and modeled shadows at this point. Overall, the simple, flat, and frontal style reveals that Ebisu was not blessed with precocious draftsmanship, and that the funky primitivism of his early *Garō* work was the product of dedicated practice and inventive compromises rather than intentional deskilling and feigned modernist naïveté. Considering that Ebisu



“Teachers Damned to the Pits of Hell,” *Man* (1970)

was just a few years out of high school, the adolescent resentment and pushed-to-violent-extremes slapstick makes perfect sense in *Man*. These same male adolescent energies, however, essentially fueled Ebisu’s entire manga career, becoming a core element in the “heta-uma” aesthetic (discussed below), and arguably his television career as well. That his first book was titled after a remake of juvenilia feels entirely appropriate.<sup>15</sup>

\*

Ebisu worked for the sign shop in Nagasaki for four years. In 1970, he decided that he had had enough. Too shy to tell his boss that he wished to quit, he lied and said he wanted time off to check out the World’s Expo in Osaka. Otherwise stringent companies were regularly giving their employees vacations for this, understood as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. He said goodbye to his mother, skipped the Expo, and headed for Tokyo. Overwhelmed by the crowds in the capital and with only 35,000

yen and an extra pair of underwear to his name, the first thing he did upon detrainning was buy a sports newspaper. What a relief! Toda Boat Races (on the Arakawa River, west of Kawaguchi) was just north of his friend's place in Narimasu (Itabashi Ward), where he was due to stay temporarily. If all else failed, at least he could gamble.

Though enamored with design and manga, it was for the sake of another medium that Ebisu relocated to Tokyo. He wanted to become a screenwriter. Like most kids, he had devoured movies since elementary school. *Godzilla* and *Psycho* come up in his childhood reminiscences. In high school, his love of film was robust enough that he joined a group called the Nagasaki Cinema Club, which enabled him to watch Japanese and European arthouse films distributed through the famous ATG (Art Theatre Guild), a rare privilege in remote Kyushu. He enrolled in a screenwriting correspondence school, but knew he needed more focused instruction and left Nagasaki specifically with that goal in mind. The number of theatres and variety of films in Tokyo floored him. The affordability and accessibility of arthouse films overjoyed him. He frequented ATG-affiliated Bungeiza in Ikebukuro, though never found the courage to visit the ivory tower of art cinema in Tokyo, Sōgetsu Hall in Aoyama, which he had dreamed about visiting since Nagasaki.<sup>16</sup> He rarely let a new release by Ōshima Nagisa, Teshigahara Hiroshi, Jean-Luc Godard, or Luis Buñuel pass him by. "I knew it, Tokyo has everything I wanted! There's nothing like the big city! It's overflowing with everything you could ever want to know!" he later caricatured his youthful immigrant excitement.<sup>17</sup>

But don't go thinking Ebisu had overly impeccable taste. "I'll be honest, I like art films," he began a series of chatty film reviews for the porn manga magazine *Manga Parking* in the mid '80s. "It doesn't matter if I understand them or not. I don't know how many times I have fallen asleep watching *Last Year at Marienbad*, but I always leave satisfied."<sup>18</sup> The fact that the movie could be so captivating in its mystery and beauty despite being so oblique and soporifically slow impressed him.<sup>19</sup> On one occasion, he names Godard's *Weekend*, which he saw when he first got to Tokyo, as his all-time favorite film, for its "slow shift into madness" from normal everyday life into insane and utterly unforeseeable events.<sup>20</sup> On another, John Carpenter's *The Thing*.<sup>21</sup> In the '80s, he also raved about Steven Spielberg's *Jaws*, David Lynch's *Eraserhead*, and Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* and *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*. He liked cinema best when it was bold and absurd, but also clear and unpretentious in its dialogue and storytelling. He hated *Koyaanisqatsi*, but thought *Ghostbusters* and *Gremlins* were great.

Such catholic tastes, however, seem to have been the product, at least partly, of a series of reality-checks. Upon arrival in Tokyo, Ebisu wanted to take classes at the famed Scenario Center in Aoyama. That cost money. So after a short and boring stint as a surveyor, he applied for a job at Mutsumiya, a design agency in Shibuya specializing in train, bus, and other transportation-related clients. Everyone in design and advertising in Tokyo had a college degree, it seemed. Everyone was a snappy dresser and smooth talker. To the high school graduate from Kyushu, more than a 1000 km away, Tokyo began to appear as a hive of snobs. The city and its people made him feel inferior.<sup>22</sup> There were no jobs for him in the design department, he was told. But if you're okay with the sign department . . . He came all the way to



Tokyo only to end up doing the same damn thing he had done in Nagasaki. He wasn't even allowed a hand in fabrication this time. He transported and installed signs for close to another three years. ATG and Yokoo Tadanori aspirations minus a college degree and sufficiently urbane sensibilities equals a disgruntled, pachinko-playing sign-installer. Mutsumiya at least supplied him a room and three meals a day. It also afforded him a year of classes at the Scenario Center. There he learned how to construct clear and effective stories and dialogue. He also learned that he probably wasn't cut out for the film industry, since he didn't like working with other people.

In the meantime, Ebisu got hitched. He was never good with the ladies. His high school art club was stacked with chicks, but they barely even spoke to him. He finally mustered the courage to ask a girl out at the age of eighteen, someone in his film club. She begrudgingly agreed. He took her to a morning screening of *Planet of the Apes*. She said goodbye after lunch. Meanwhile, a different girl in the film club had her eyes on him. She worked at the art supply store where Ebisu bought materials to draw manga. She frequently tried chatting him up. She even invited him to the movies. He said he was readying to leave for Tokyo and didn't have time. He left. She persisted. She got his address from a friend and began writing letters. He kindly responded. She moved to Tokyo and proposed they hang out. He acquiesced, and slowly began warming to her charms, their common interests, and the sensations in his pants. An uncertain virgin of twenty-three, Ebisu would dash to the bathroom on their dates to jerk off and regain control of himself. And then finally: "It's embarrassing, so I don't want to go into detail. It was in the woods opposite the Inokashira Park Zoo. With towering trees thick with foliage, it's dark there even during the day. No one comes by. It was the perfect place for doing it."<sup>23</sup> This would be near where the Ghibli Museum now is. She laughed when he got grass in his underwear. They moved in together, got pregnant, got married, had a daughter (1972), then a son (1974). They moved from squalid quarters in Mitakadai (near Kichijōji) to public housing in Tokorozawa, which was spacious enough to both raise kids comfortably and for him to have his own room for drawing comics, which he had continued drawing ever since leaving Nagasaki.

He had also continued reading *Garo* and hoped to submit something to their rolling call for amateur submissions. Desiring more time to hone his skills, he quit his unforgiving sign-installer job and became a paper recycler. The pay was good and you rarely had to deal with coworkers. The job entailed driving around neighborhoods all day in a small truck asking over a megaphone if anyone had old newspapers or magazines they wanted to dispose of. You could structure your time how you wished. You could go home early and draw, or sneak off to the Tamagawa Boat Races in Fuchū when business was slow. His wife was never crazy about his gambling habit. They were poor. They had two small children. In addition to mothering, she worked on the side delivering packages for a department store and collecting newspaper subscription monies. But only once, claims Ebisu, did his gambling cause a real fight in these years. "Let me borrow 50,000 yen," he asked her. "I found a way to never lose. No question about it this time. If I lose, I promise I'll never gamble again!" She gave him the money. He lost it all. "When I got home, she was even more pissed off



“Pachinko,” *Garō* (August 1973)

than I expected. Objects even flew. In repentance, I quit gambling for a month. I had promised that I’d quit forever, but just that month was pure torture. So that she might lessen my punishment, I worked my ass off all month and got more serious about drawing comics.”<sup>24</sup>

Finally, he felt confident enough to approach *Garō*. With a comic about a young man who kills his live-in girlfriend with an electrical appliance cord, he headed to publisher Seirindō’s shabby offices in Jinbochō. “The story ain’t bad, but this drawing just won’t do,” Nagai Katsuichi, president of Seirindō and head editor of *Garō*, told him.<sup>25</sup> Ebisu knew it was standard to use a G-pen to create manga, but he couldn’t make that tool work for him, so at this early stage of his career he used the preferred pen of graphic designers, a Rotring rapidograph, to which he had first been introduced in his high school design club.<sup>26</sup> His second submission went better. “One day, I got home from work and saw an envelope on the table. It was from Seirindō. My heart raced as I opened it. It said that my work had been accepted.”<sup>27</sup>



“Pachinko,” *Garō* (August 1973)

Thus “Pachinko” – a jerky but energetic, Yokoo and Awazu-styled, Nejishiki-esque story about a paper recycler who escapes a surprise visit from his in-laws to go play pachinko, but gets lost in a labyrinthine department store on the way – was published in the August 1973 issue of *Garō*. “When the magazine arrived in the mail, my wife and I turned through the pages of my story over and over again. Little by little, the fact that I was actually published began to sink in, and I literally jumped with joy.”<sup>28</sup> Whenever the couple had reason to celebrate, they would typically buy two slices of 50 yen cake at a famous bakery in Kichijōji or supplement her tasty curry (Ebisu’s favorite food) with 50 grams worth of pork. But this was no ordinary good news. They bought *four* slices of cake *and* had pork curry!<sup>29</sup> This despite the fact that he knew *Garō* didn’t pay.

With a few months’ savings in the bank, Ebisu quit his paper recycler job to focus on comics. Of the works in the present volume, “Workplace” (March 1974) and “Battles Without Honor or Humanity” (May 1974) – the latter named after

the Fukasaku Kinji yakuza film – were probably drawn during this three-month period. They, like his other stories for *Garō* in the ‘70s, are important art historical bridges between the counterculture of the ‘60s and the subculture of the ‘80s. It is important that they are angry, awkwardly drawn, and funny. If *Garō* of the ‘60s was rooted in leftwing politics, social commentary, experiences of economic hardship after the war, the language of kashihon gekiga, and a symbiotic relationship with mainstream manga magazines and their professional polish, the ‘70s marked the flowering of a more personal, more playful, and more expressionistic direction with stronger links to illustration and design versus the manga industry. These are remembered as the beginning of the “omoshiro-shugi” (fun-ism) years of *Garō*, under the editorship of Minami Shinbō (author of the first essay in this book). Ebisu’s work, however, demonstrates how the discontent of the ‘60s was still very much a part of the reformation of Japanese culture in the ‘70s, even as it was gaining new cultural vectors and a new sense of humor that would make it amenable to the more affluent and less embattled society and artistic community to come.

Ebisu was a typical baby boomer in many ways. During the ‘60s, millions moved from the countryside and regional cities to Tokyo in pursuit of jobs and dreams. The vast majority did not have college degrees and were stuck working undesirable unskilled jobs. The resentment they and their marginalized seniors felt became a leitmotif in manga in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, including that of *Garō*-affiliated artists like Tatsumi Yoshihiro and (one of Ebisu’s favorite cartoonists) Tsuge Tadao. Like most young people, Ebisu had friends in the ‘60s who belonged to Zengakuren, the radical student movement. His wife had been involved with the anti-Vietnam War group Beheiren. But he himself was little interested in organized politics. He hated it when friends, and friends of friends, asked him for donations to support “the cause.” He has also expressed strong reservations about political art of the avant-garde variety, finding it ineffective, presumptuous, and ultimately self-serving for the privileged artists who typically produce it.<sup>30</sup>

As an artist who worked full-time in menial jobs, the joys and discontents of the working class were not abstract subjects for Ebisu, as they had been for, say, *Garō*’s founder, Shirato Sanpei. They were instead the natural content of self-portraiture and self-expression. In this, Ebisu’s life and work resonates with that of Tsuge Tadao, who spent most of his adolescence and young adulthood working as a manual laborer for dirty blood banks, a restaurant kitchen, and a propane tank distributor. Tadao’s work marked a general shift in *Garō* away from the “proletarian” and “citizen” conceits of the ‘60s, and Ebisu was probably welcomed into the magazine partly because his work resonated with that tradition. While he was bowled over by “Nejishiki,” he never slid into the narrowly private and introspective focus that Yoshiharu and his bohemian followers Abe Shin’ichi, Suzuki Ōji, and Furukawa Masuzō popularized in the early ‘70s. He kept his eye on the working class – which is to say, his class – which he expanded to include crushing white-collar work as well. In this, Tadao again, as well as Tatsumi, might be seen as predecessors, with their many images of disgruntled, aging, middle managers in small and failing companies.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, Ebisu’s work is stylish in a way that that of most of his



seniors in *Garo* was not. It is dark and violent while being fashionable, and without being cryptic and allegorical in the way that late '60s *angura* ("underground," mainly theatre) culture often was. This is perhaps easiest to see in how Ebisu processes Yokoo Tadanori. Though in his writings and interviews Ebisu says nothing but admiring things about Yokoo, his work expresses distinct ambivalence. "We all wanted to be graphic designers," he wrote about high school. "We pored through magazines like *Design* and *Idea* like we were looking at celebrities. Yokoo Tadanori was more a star to us than any actor or singer was."<sup>32</sup> Though Yokoo did not graduate college, he came from a decently comfortable background in Kobe and took to the role of the smooth and fashionable creative type in Tokyo naturally. That he was also handsome and witty was apparent to anyone who encountered the many articles about and photographs of him in magazines in the mid and late '60s. While his imagery became the face of the artistic counterculture, he also took on high-profile corporate jobs, including art director for a pavilion at the Osaka Expo. By bridging high and low, art and commerce, and corporate and avant-garde, Yokoo was a key figure in the Japanese version of the "conquest of cool" (Thomas Frank) that occurred in many metropolises in the late '60s.

He was, in a word, as both an artist and persona, Tokyo. He was the Tokyo of teeming imagination and art. He was the embodiment of the dream of making it big in the capital. He was what attracted aspiring young creators to the city, but also what highlighted the disappointing realities soon after they arrived. Dressed to the nines and mixing with the stars, Yokoo was the Tokyo that a backwater high school grad like Ebisu was unlikely ever to achieve. He was the Tokyo that made outsiders feel inferior and resentful, even if they still remained in love with the look, the idea, and the aura.

It is therefore interesting that the Yokoo style that Ebisu adapted, as mentioned above, was the naïve Yokoo of the mid '60s. This is the Yokoo, of course, that Ebisu first came across in high school. But it is also a style that dovetailed neatly with Ebisu's very different, blue-collar worldview. While Yokoo usually used that style to access faraway and imaginary horizons and pop culture stereotypes – America the Great, Art History, the Nude, Hollywood, Supermen, Nippon – Ebisu employed it instead as a way to capture the vernacular, not as an abstract idea or a curious variety of commodity in souvenir or antique shops in the vein of Pop, but as part of the emotional and material culture of average people's everyday life. Take the iconography of gambling, for example. For Yokoo, *yakuza* and *hanafuda* cards are stereotypical symbols of a performative Japanese-ness, a native rejoinder to Lichtenstein's comics and Warhol's soup cans. For Ebisu, in contrast, the decorative composition of a pachinko machine is not just an image, it is the map of a game, a contest, a battlefield with real-life consequences. The mahjong tile is likewise not just a motif, and certainly not an assembly of Oriental windings, but a tool, a weapon, a desperate wish that the working stiff might escape his drudgery and frustration through momentary leisure if not by striking it rich. Women, typically sexual objects in Yokoo's universe of actresses and pin-ups, are fellow combatants in Ebisu's waking nightmares. The domestic violence is hard to look at, but precisely because it feels

real despite its cartoony extremes.

Just as his titles were often appropriated from movies, many of Ebisu's title pages look practically swiped from Yokoo's archive. But turn the page, and immediately that style has been deconstructed and jerry-rigged back together for self-expression in a world at the other end of the social spectrum from Yokoo's circuit of beautiful people. If Ebisu began drawing comics as a young teen as a way to act out his frustrations with the bullies in middle school, then perhaps the manga in the present book represent his art historical revenge against the pie-in-the-sky Tokyo that Yokoo represented. In general, I think "heta-uma" (again, see below) should be understood as a post-Pop phenomenon, so an artist who responded to Yokoo's cool pastiche with grounded resentment, non-stage blood, and a passionate shot of realism makes sense as a transitional figure. Ebisu's work is also a great example of how realism need not require naturalism (two concepts often confused in the literature on gekiga), and that the oneiric surrealism that "Nejishiki" introduced into manga was not, if read properly, an invitation (à la Suzuki Ōji) to daydream. I take Minami Shinbō's article to be arguing something similar. Put vaguely, with Ebisu's work, Pop was *Garō*-ized.

\*

Quickly realizing that drawing for non-paying *Garō* wasn't going to pay the bills, Ebisu began thinking it would be better to have a steady job and cartoon as a hobby on the side. Considering that he had two kids and a gambling habit as well, a salary seemed like the more responsible way to go. He got a job with Duskin, the cleaning goods rental business depicted in "Wiped Out Workers." Most of the stories translated here were created during the beginning and end of the seven years he commuted to and from the Nerima office of that utterly average company.

"The strange thing was, the more I got used to the salaryman lifestyle, the less I felt like drawing comics. The flame of the dream that someday I might be able to make a living on comics got smaller and smaller, until I even began thinking that it wouldn't be so bad to live out my life quietly as a salaryman. . . . And then one day, after working at Duskin for a couple of years, when my dreams of being a cartoonist had shrunk to the size of my pinky, I found myself on a service visit to a certain person's mansion. It was Matsumoto Leiji's home. *Space Battleship Yamato* was a huge hit, and so naturally his house was huge too. Ahh, if only I could be a popular cartoonist and live in a house like this . . ." <sup>33</sup> But with *Garō* not paying him a yen for his stories, this was a pipe dream indeed for the mop-exchanger. Besides, not once, to my knowledge, did Ebisu ever try to tailor his work to a mass audience.

After "Tempest of Love" (July 1976) – which was based on a dream, and whose title was swiped from the Japanese title of Liliana Cavani's *The Night Porter* (1974, another Italian film, like *The Damned*, about decadent Nazis) – Ebisu didn't publish anything for more than three years. Fortuitously, just as his cartooning aspirations were beginning to fade for good, he received a random phone call from two fans who wanted to discuss potentially working together. Though doubtful, he agreed to meet them at a coffee shop in Ikebukuro. Their scruffy, long-haired hippie look did not

inspire confidence. Ebisu, mind you, spent his days around suits and uniforms, his own frumpy sartorial choices notwithstanding. They asked him to draw comics for their magazine *Jam*. They wanted not one comic, but one every other month. They also offered good money: 4000 yen per page. At sixteen or eighteen pages, that was like half of month's wages for a single story. But Ebisu was unsure, especially when he heard that *Jam* was sold exclusively through vending machines, a popular outlet for porn until the mid '80s, and for dildos, rubber vaginas, and used panties until recently. Aside from the nudie photos in its color section, however, there was hardly any pornography in *Jam*. Spunky and improvisational articles about punk, rock, new wave, no wave, drugs, sex, fetishism, mysticism, occultism, professional wrestling, Elvis, and celebrities' household trash, with alternating DIY paste-up collage and minimalist mock corporate layouts, were *Jam*'s bread and butter. As the magazine also carried the work of his friend Watanabe Kazuhiro, an editor at *Garō* and fellow cartoonist, Ebisu decided to give them a try.<sup>34</sup>

"Thus I made my pro debut belatedly at the age of thirty-three," wrote Ebisu in 2002 – the wording of which gives you an idea of how even *Garō*'s devotees thought of its inability to pay.<sup>35</sup> His first story for *Jam*, "The Family of Uncertainties" ("Fukakujitsusei kazoku"), was published in June 1979. "The celebrated genius cartoonist and Duskin salesman returns after many years silence in *Garō*. Sublated fin de siècle self-destructive despair expressed in extremist art that you might understandably mistake was extracted from the hell of daily life," ran the editorial copy. To Ebisu's surprise, *Jam* put their money where their mouth was: 64,000 yen for sixteen pages arrived promptly into his bank account. The title story of the present collection, "Teachers Damned to the Pits of Hell," was published in the final issue of *Jam* in January 1980, a special "guerilla issue" organized after the magazine's cancellation was already decided. A new magazine by the same editors soon replaced it, *Heaven*, and this, too, became one of Ebisu's regular gigs. "Late Night Party," included in the present volume, was initially published in *Manga Piranha* (June 1981), an actual porn manga magazine that also hosted work by the likes of Maruo Suehiro. Confident about how his cartooning career was going, but no less shy, Ebisu gave Duskin a full year's notice that he would like to quit. More manga commissions came his way, especially from porn publications. (Ironically, Ebisu hated drawing sex scenes and never drew anything legitimately erotic.) But the money was still not enough to support a family in the Tokyo area. Ebisu decided it was time to return home to Nagasaki.

"Wait, hold on," said Nagai Katsuichi, when Ebisu stopped by Seirindō to tell them that he was leaving. "Let's publish a collection of your work and see how it goes. If that doesn't work out, then you can leave. Just wait a year."<sup>36</sup> With a cover designed by hot illustrator Terry Johnson (née Yumura Teruhiko) and an afterword (translated herein) by former *Garō* editor (and writer and illustrator) Minami Shinbō, *Teachers Damned to the Pits of Hell* (here shortened to *The Pits of Hell*) was a watershed book. Not only was it an immediate cult classic when it was published in the summer of 1981, due to the fact that fans had been waiting for years for an Ebisu collection. It went through seven printings in its first eight years, and rumor has it that it and

subsequent books by Ebisu kept Seirindō solvent in the early '80s. Tezuka Noriko, who joined Seirindō as an editor in 1979, estimates that upwards of 40,000 copies of *Teachers Damned to the Pits of Hell* were printed until the early '90s, at which point Ebisu's "avant-garde manga" stopped selling. The reason for that, she thinks, is because his fanbase had shifted from "our Ebisu" of the subculture to "everyone's Ebisu" of television. "But that book," she affirms, "really marked a turning point," both for Ebisu, who was bombarded with cartooning, illustration, and design commissions after it came out, and for the commercial viability and cultural influence of the burgeoning "heta-uma" scene, of which Ebisu is seen as a pioneer.<sup>37</sup>

Literally "bad-good" (or "bad-nice" in period Japanese English), heta-uma refers generally to things that look like they were dashed off or slapped together but actually took sensibility if not actual skill and care to produce. Heta-uma is not quite the same thing as the deskilled refinement practiced by the literati. It is closer to primitivism and other forms of avant-garde naïveté, though in many cases the simplicity and crudeness of heta-uma is not put-on. Spanning the brows, on the high side the term refers to simple, minimalist, and child-like forms that exude character and feeling despite looking fey and trifling. On the low side, the more famous side, heta-uma refers to crap that excels in its ability to repulse. Hence the most common gloss of the term as something that is "so bad that it's good" and a list of common characteristics that include nonsense narratives, exaggerated slapstick, crass jokes, open indulgence in things enjoyed by men (eating, drinking, gambling, whoring, female sexual organs, masturbating, and their own penises), an adolescent obsession with feces, barf, cum, and other bodily ejecta, and an anarchic assault on mainstream family values and white-collar workaholicism. Gelling in the '70s around the work of illustrator and sometimes cartoonist Yumura Teruhiko, representative artists include Ebisu, Anzai Mizumaru, Watanabe Kazuhiro, Nemoto Takashi (whose debut in *Garō* followed hot on the heels of the publication of *The Pits of Hell*), Shiriagari Kotobuki, and Hanakuma Yūsaku. If they had been born Japanese, Rory Hayes, Gary Panter, and Mark Beyer would be seen as heta-uma pioneers. Depending on whom you read, forefathers include Henri Rousseau, Picasso, Ben Shahn (whose influence in Japan was massive), Okamoto Tarō, Sugiura Shigeru, Wada Makoto, and (as noted earlier) Tsuge Yoshiharu and Abe Shin'ichi. Considering Ebisu's roots, we should add Yokoo Tadanori and, through him, Push Pin and Roy Lichtenstein. At any rate, yes, it's a very male world.

Even if it was not organized consciously as such and issued no manifestoes per se, heta-uma was so influential that it can be described as a movement. Though associated mainly with *Garō*, heta-uma sensibilities originated in illustration and advertising, before infiltrating comics, then fashion, copywriting, prose writing, painting, sculpture, and many other practices within mass culture, subculture, and contemporary art. By the mid '80s, it was a buzzword on the level of "punk" and "new wave." Recently, it has been elevated to a descriptor for a wide variety of jokingly deskilled and unintentionally charming but poorly created works of visual art dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> The global success of Murakami Takashi's Superflat has lodged anime and the polished amateurs of otaku culture as the cultural wellsprings





# 地獄に堕ちた教師ども

えびすよしかず

Ultra Design and Deluxe Color Mixed  
by  
TERRIBLE TERRI and Marvellous Martin  
for  
©1981 TOKYO FUNNY STUDIO



*Teachers Damned to the Pits of Hell* (Seirindō, July 1981), front and back covers,  
designed by Yumura Teruhiko

of note from the '70s and '80s. But it is impossible to understand equally important artists like Ōtake Shinrō and Aida Makoto, and by extension a group like Chim-Pom, without acknowledging *Garō* and the “bad taste” of heta-uma.<sup>39</sup> Heta-uma is to Japan what punk is to England and the United States. It practically ruled Japanese subculture until the end of the twentieth century.

Ironically, “everyone’s Ebisu” was a direct product of heta-uma’s popularity. Tokyo Dry Cell Battery (Tokyo kandenchi), a theatrical troupe in Shimokitazawa, asked Ebisu to design a poster for them in 1985. It was a hit. He designed other items for them, when one day the director asked him to appear on stage. A non-talking part led to a talking part, and then another. Then television producers began calling, and then more, until he had to hire a full-time agent, giving birth to one of the most curious contradictions in Japanese pop culture: the pudgy, idiosyncratic, effortlessly charismatic, harmless-looking Uncle Ebisu of television, versus the no-holds-barred, angsty, laughing idiot maniac Bad Boy Ebisu of comics.

Gambler Ebisu was somewhere in between. Back in the days when purse strings were tight, he usually kept things under control. Once famous, he no longer needed to worry about that. “With family finances in a comfortable state, my trips to the boat races began to increase. Whenever I had a breather from fighting through manga deadlines, I headed to the boat races. My wife gave me a fixed monthly allowance, but it was hardly enough to play pachinko and mahjong as well. Needing to fill my war chest, I regularly snuck money out of our joint bank account.” She quickly found out. Or more accurately, she kept finding out, leading to explosive fights. “Just like in a manga, she screamed ‘Get out!’ and threw me out of the house, chucking my shoes at me through the door.” With the neighbors listening, he had to beg and promise never to gamble again to get her to unlock the door.<sup>40</sup>

“My wife was the holy mother of god to me,” Ebisu has said on numerous occasions. She forgave him again when he was arrested and embarrassed for the whole television-watching world to see in 1998. Decamping to Las Vegas was actually her idea.

1. *No Gamble, No Life: Boku wa kōshite ikitekita* (Tokyo: Kosumo no hon, 2016), p. 191. This is a heavily revised edition of a differently titled book from 1996. Unless otherwise noted, all citations in this essay are author Ebisu Yoshikazu.
2. *No Gamble*, p. 187.
3. *No Gamble*, p. 3.
4. *No Gamble*, p. 208.
5. *No Gamble*, p. 44.
6. *Hetauma na ai*, bunko edition (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2002), pp. 55-6.
7. Artist interview, *Jigoku o mita otoko* (Tokyo: Magazine five, 2004), pp. 178-9.
8. Artist interview, *Yuki no onna to raamen to* (Tokyo: Magazine five, 2004), pp. 182-3.
9. *No Gamble*, p. 22.
10. “Chansu o kureta Garo,” in *Garo mandara*, ed. Garo shi hensan iinkai (Tokyo: TBS Britannica, 1991), p. 98.
11. *No Gamble*, pp. 35-7.
12. Artist interview, *Yuki no onna to raamen to*, p. 185.
13. Of the manga mentioned in this paragraph, the following are presently available in English: Abe Shinichi’s “Love” in *That Miyoko Asagaya Feeling* (Tokyo: Black Hook Press, 2019); Hayashi Seiichi’s “Red Red Rock” in *Red Red Rock and Other Stories, 1967-1970* (London: Breakdown Press, 2016); and Tsuge Tadao’s “A Tale of Absolute and Utter Nonsense” in *Trash Market* (Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2015).
14. For more on the relationship between Yokoo and manga, see Ryan Holmberg, “When Manga was Pop,” *Art in America* (January 2016), pp. 56-63; and “Hayashi Seiichi’s Pop,” *Red Red Rock and Other Stories*, pp. iii-lvi.
15. For Ebisu’s *Man* work, select panels are reproduced in *Garo* (April 1993), pp. 34-7, while the full stories are reprinted in the hard-to-find *Hiruko senshū No. 1: Ebisu Yoshikazu* (Tokyo: Hiruko Pro, 1999), published by staff members of the bookstore Taco ché. Thank you to Taco ché’s Nakayama Ayumi and Itō Yoshikazu for allowing me to browse and photograph a rare copy of *Man* at the store.
16. *Ebisu Yoshikazu no hisokana tanoshimi* [1985] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1998), p. 198.
17. *Hisokana tanoshimi*, p. 148.
18. *Hisokana tanoshimi*, p. 135.
19. “Eiga ron de konnichiwa,” *Daun bai roo de konnichiwa* (Tokyo: Magazine five, 2004), p. 186.
20. *Hisokana tanoshimi*, pp. 242-3.
21. “Eiga ron de konnichiwa,” p. 189.
22. *Hetauma na ai*, pp. 66-7, 80.
23. *No Gamble*, p. 70.
24. *Hetauma na ai*, pp. 86-7.
25. “Chansu o kureta Garo,” p. 100. See also the interview, “Jibun no manga ga ichiban sukidayo,” *Garo* (April 1995), pp. 85-7.
26. Interview with the artist, “Debyuu saku ‘Pachinko’ o furikaette,” *Pachinko: Ebisu Yoshikazu shoki manga kessakusen* (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 2016), p. 22.
27. *No Gamble*, p. 93.
28. *No Gamble*, p. 111.
29. *Hetauma na ai*, p. 90.
30. See, for example, *Hisokana tanoshimi*, pp. 149-51; and “Sobietto no yūjin wa raamen to karee ni moeteita ka,” *Bijutsu techō* (February 1988), pp. 142-3.
31. See the manga and essays in Tsuge Tadao’s *Trash Market* (Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2015) and *Shum Wolf* (New York: New York Review Comics, 2018), and the collections of Tatsumi Yoshihiro’s short stories published by Drawn & Quarterly in the 2000s.



32. *Hisokana tanoshimi*, p. 112.
33. *No Gamble*, p. 115-8.
34. For an overview of *Jam*, see the special issue of *Spectator* vol. 39 (2017).
35. *Hetauma na ai*, p. 102.
36. This isn't an exact quote, but a paraphrase based on "Jibun no manga ga ichiban sukidayo," *Garō* (April 1995), pp. 86-7, and the interview with Nagai Katsuichi that follows on pp. 117-8.
37. Email communication with Tezuka Noriko (September 2019).
38. See *Hesomagari nihon bijutsu: Zenga kara hetauma made* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2019), especially pp. 118-21. This best-selling book originated as the exhibition catalogue for an exhibition at the Fuchū Art Museum.
39. See, for example, the interview between Aida and Ebisu, "Manga + bijutsu ÷ 2," *Prints 21* (Fall 2004), pp. 16-21.
40. *Hetauma no ai*, pp. 104-5.

# 地獄に堕ちた教師ども

これを決してアブノーマルな漫画と思うな!!

観悪懲善・阿鼻叫喚・意気沮喪・氣息奄々……

善良な市民が今日も1人、行きつく先は無間地獄!!

蛭子能収 著

A5判 定価850円

こんな漫画が

あつて

いいのかわ!!

好評発売中!!

青林堂

# 地獄に堕ちた教師ども

悪夢なら醒めてくれ!!

このままじゃ

脳味噌がブツ飛ぶぜ!!

蛭子能収 著

A5判 定価850円

Ads for *Pits of Hell*, from the back cover of *Garo* (September, December 1981)







The Pits of Hell  
Ebisu Yoshikazu

Teachers Damned to the Pits of Hell	3
Fuck Off	19
Workplace	37
Wiped Out Workers	57
Tempest of Love	85
ESP	109
Late Night Party	129
Battles Without Honor and Humanity	139
Salaryman in Hell	161

Translated and with an essay by Ryan Holmberg  
Breakdown Press



TEACHERS DAMNED TO THE PITS OF HELL

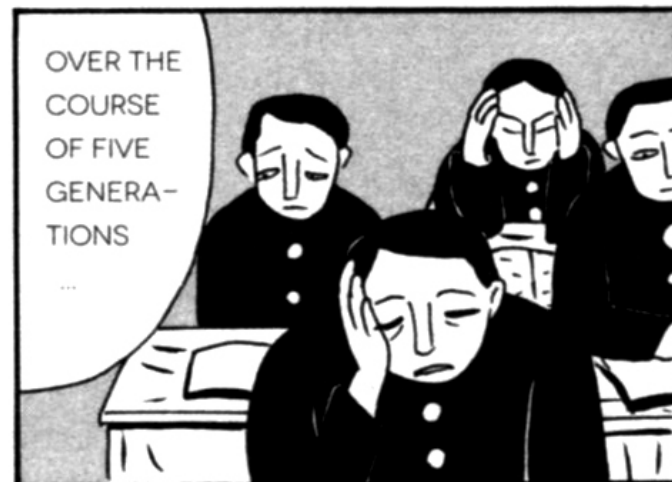
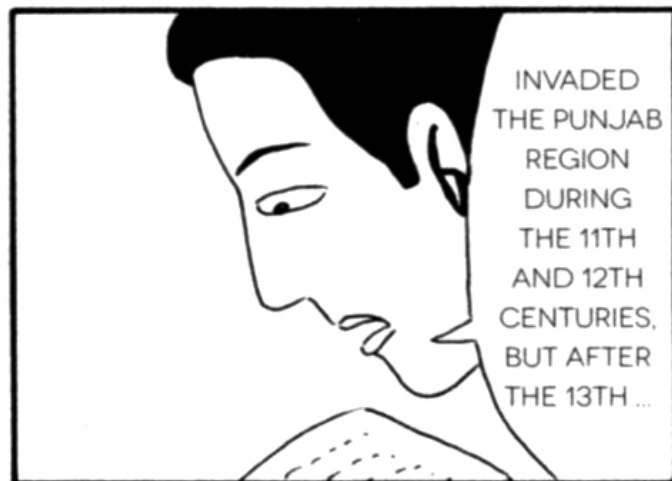


NO ROOM FOR DISCRIMINATION IN A PEACEFUL JAPAN

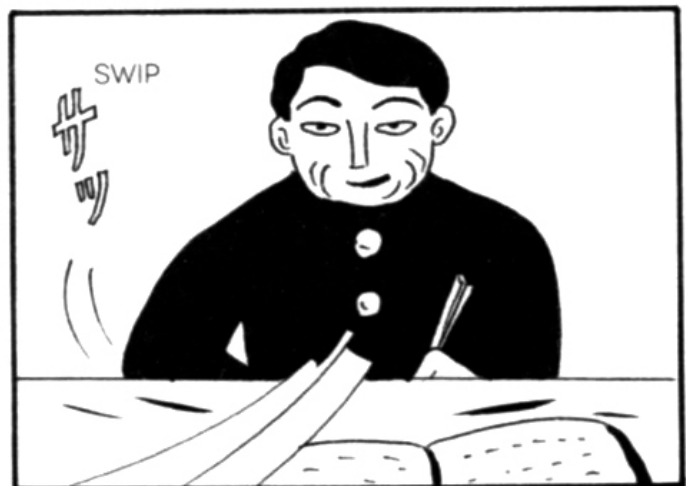


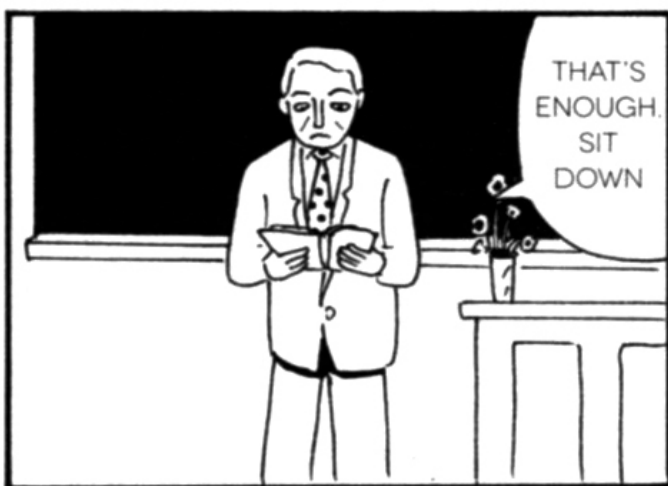


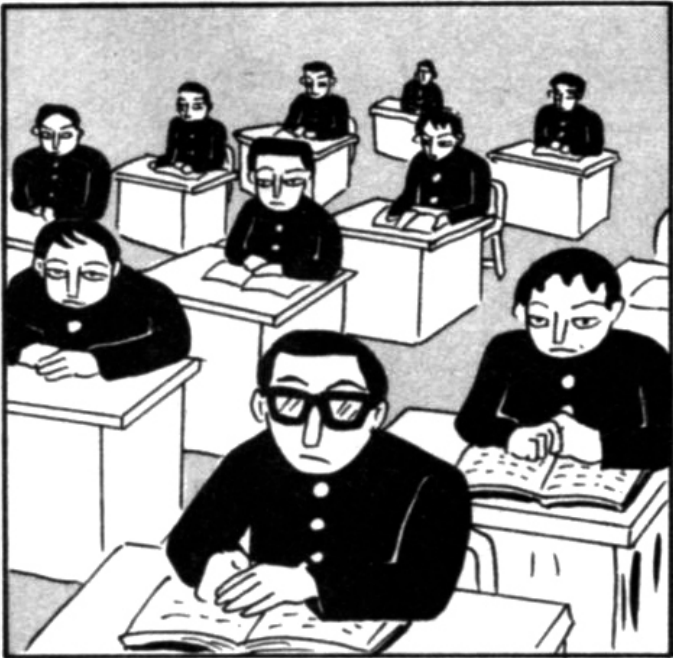
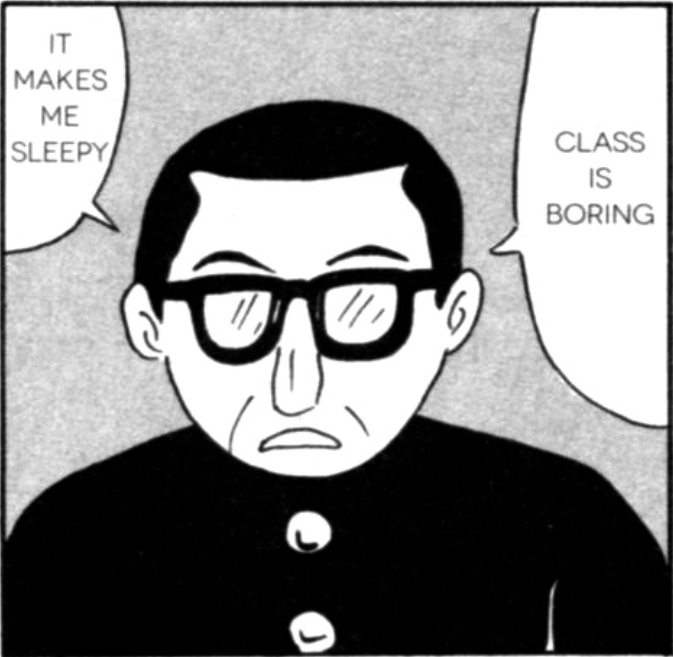
BOOK: WORLD HISTORY





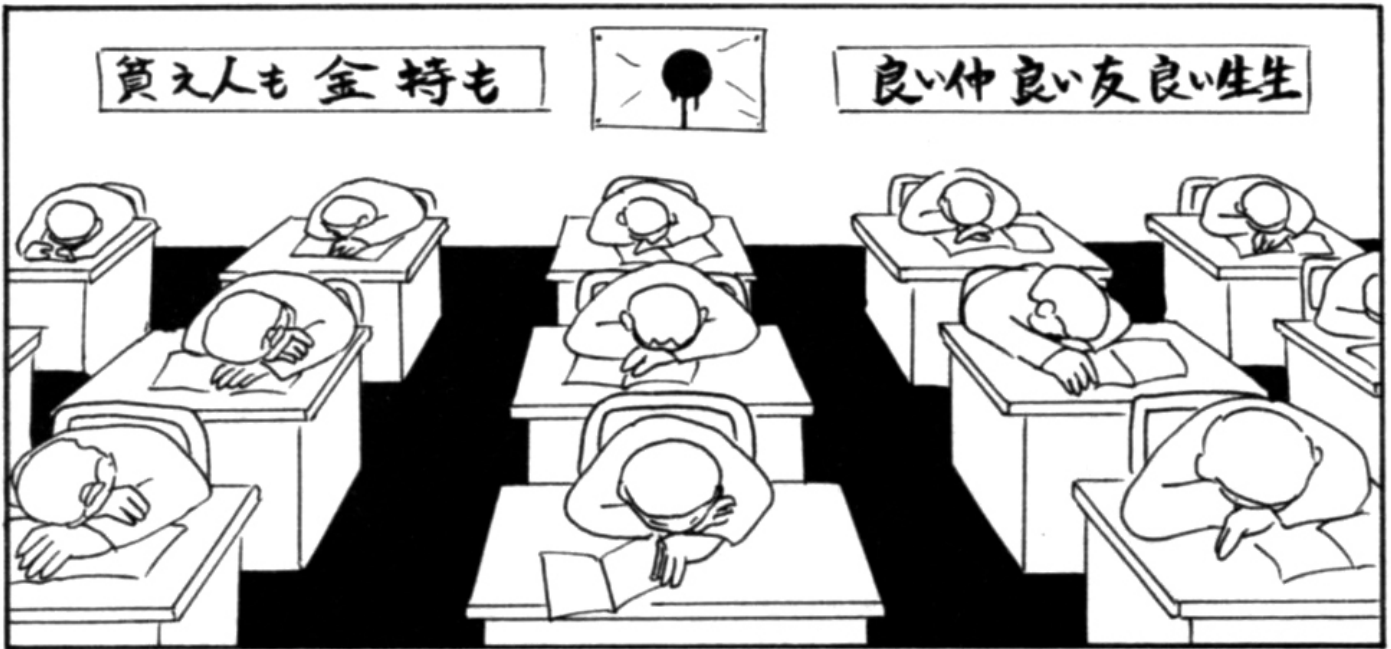






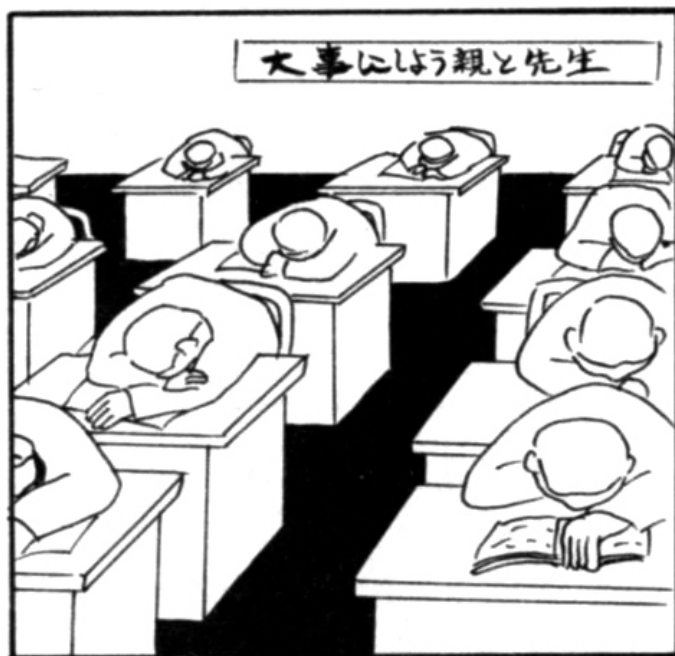




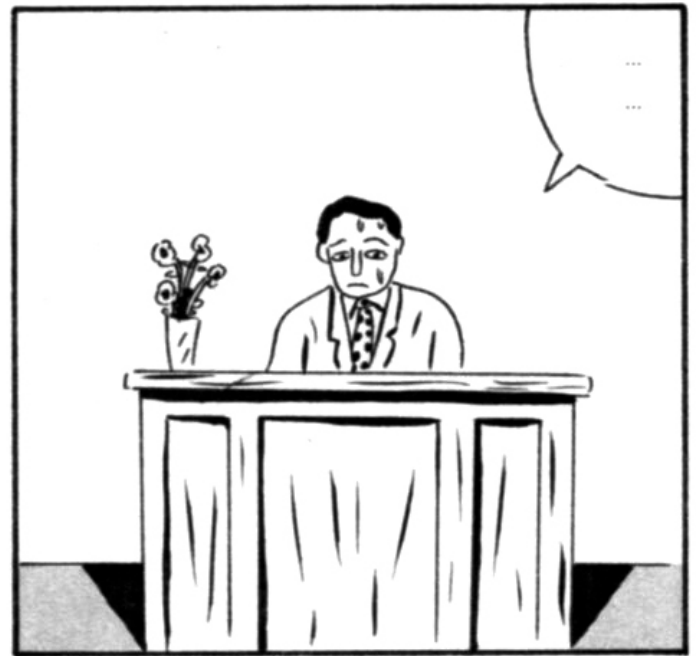


BOTH RICH AND POOR

GOOD FRIENDS GOOD TEACHERS GOOD RELATIONS

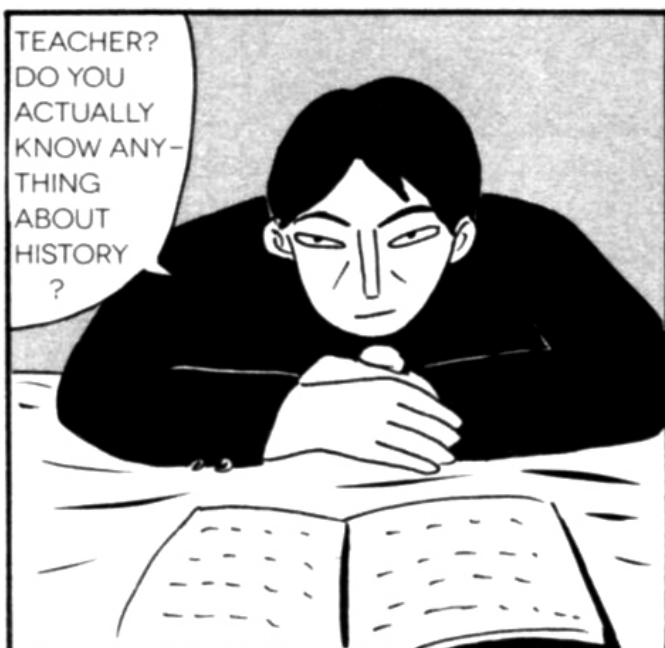


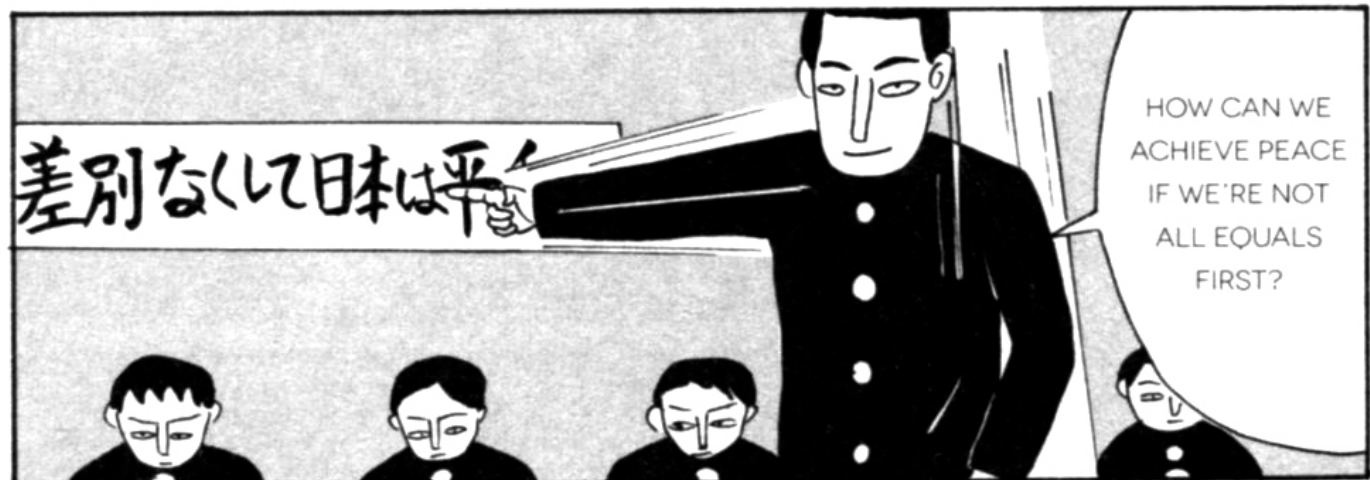
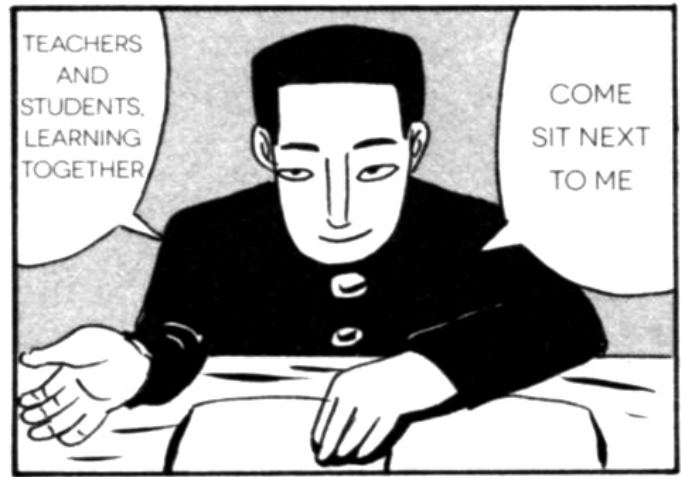
RESPECT YOUR PARENTS AND TEACHERS



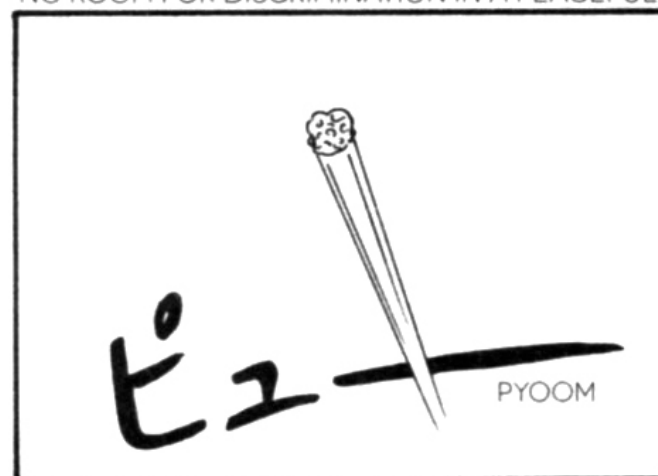


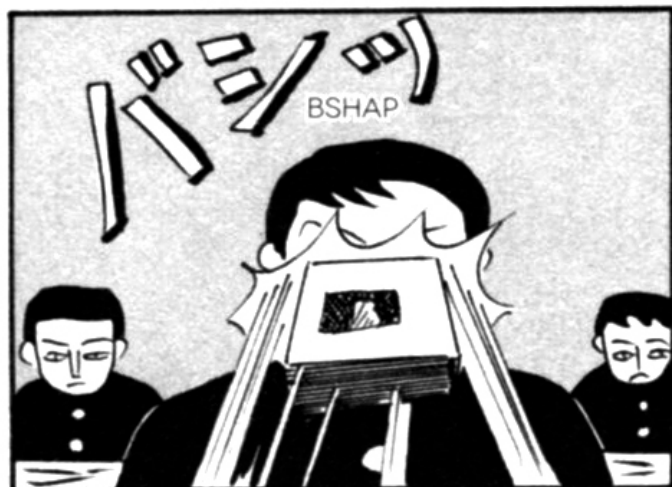
UMMM



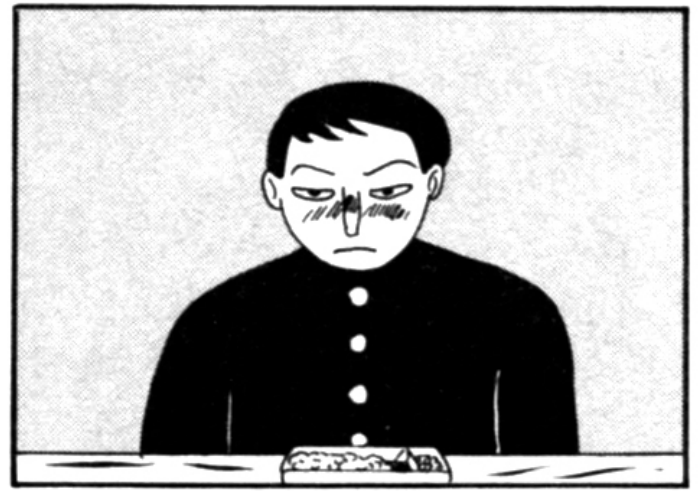


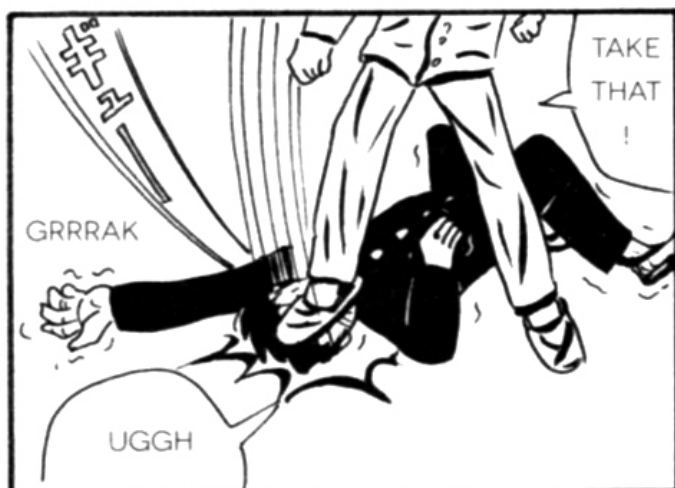
NO ROOM FOR DISCRIMINATION IN A PEACEFUL JAPAN

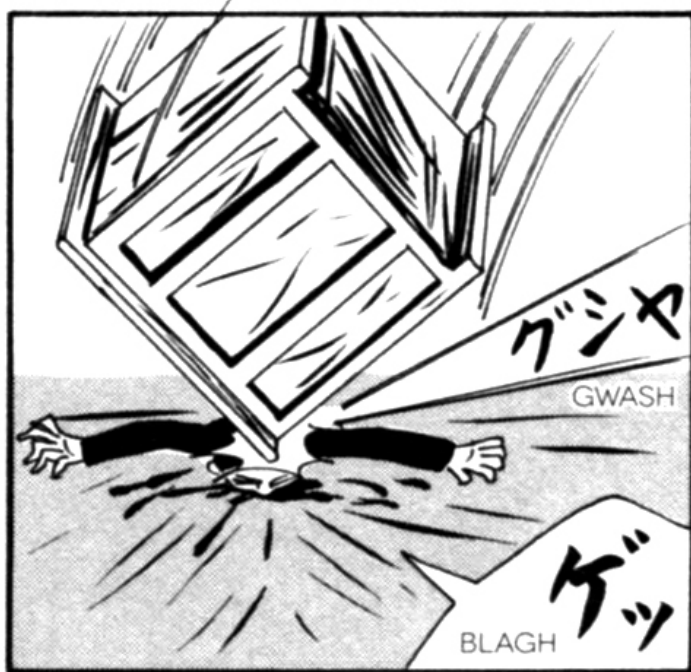
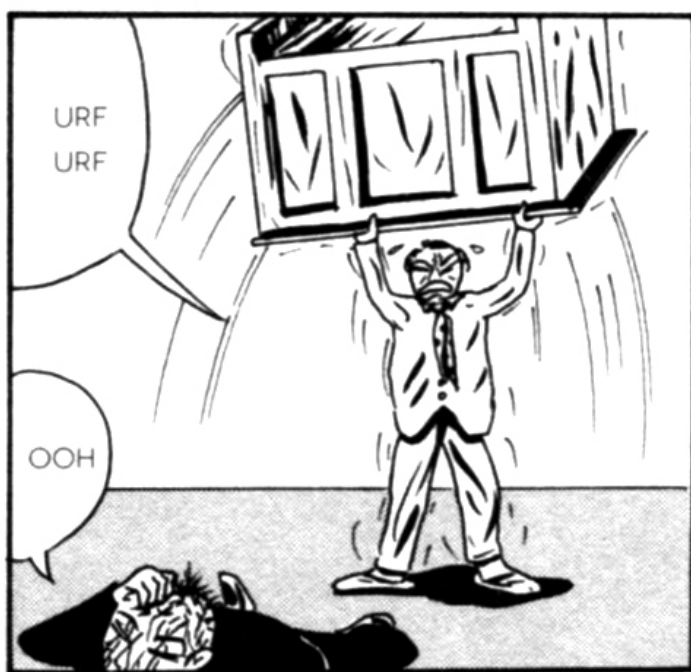
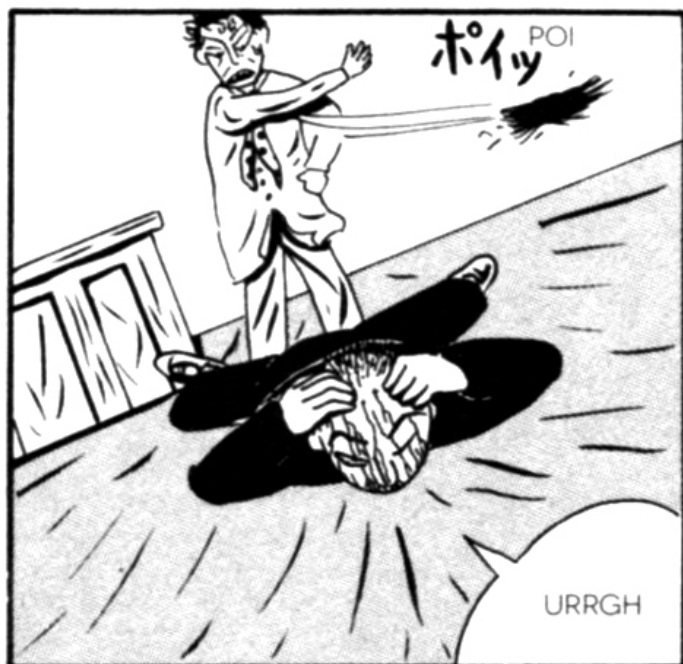


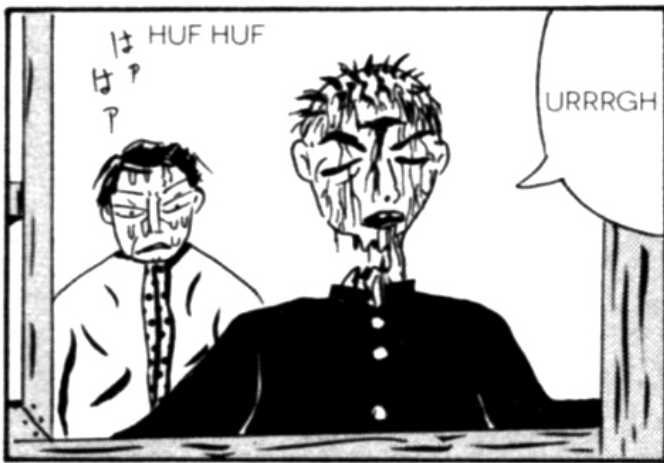
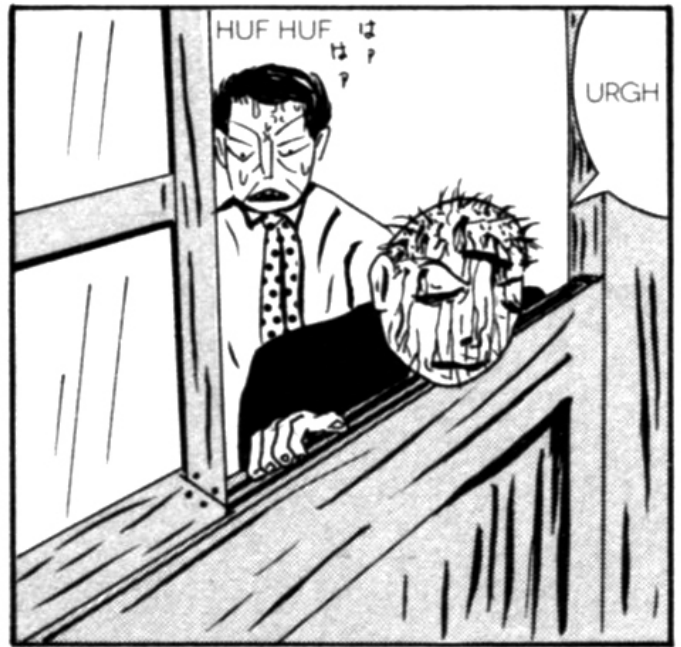




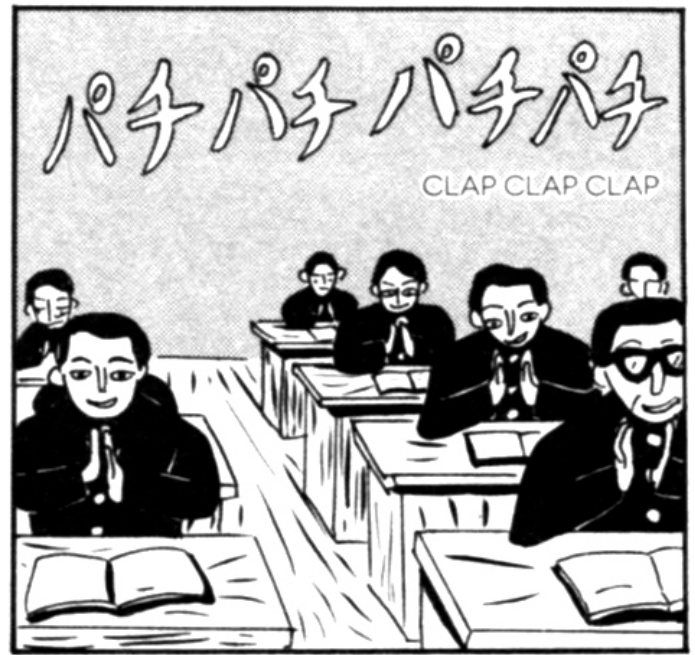
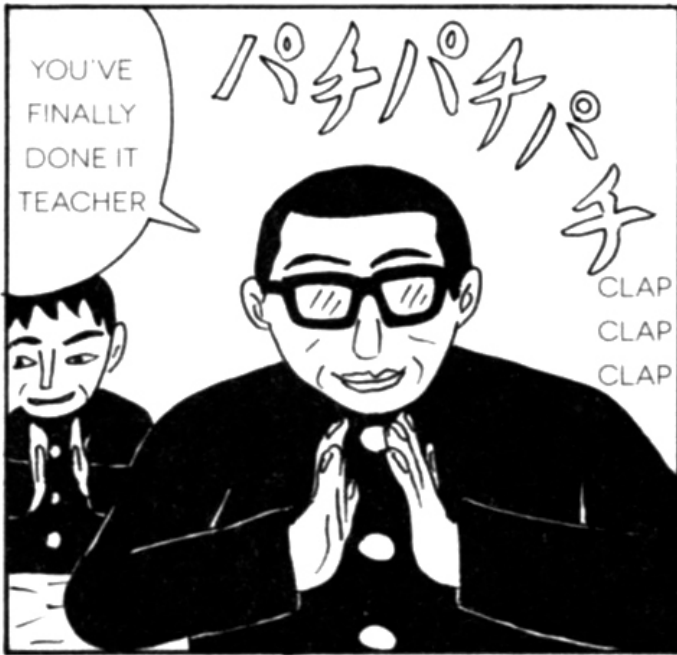










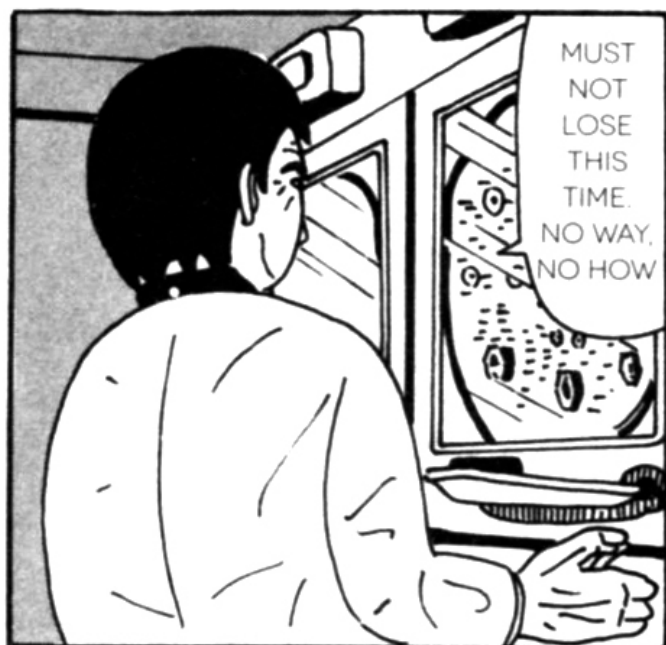


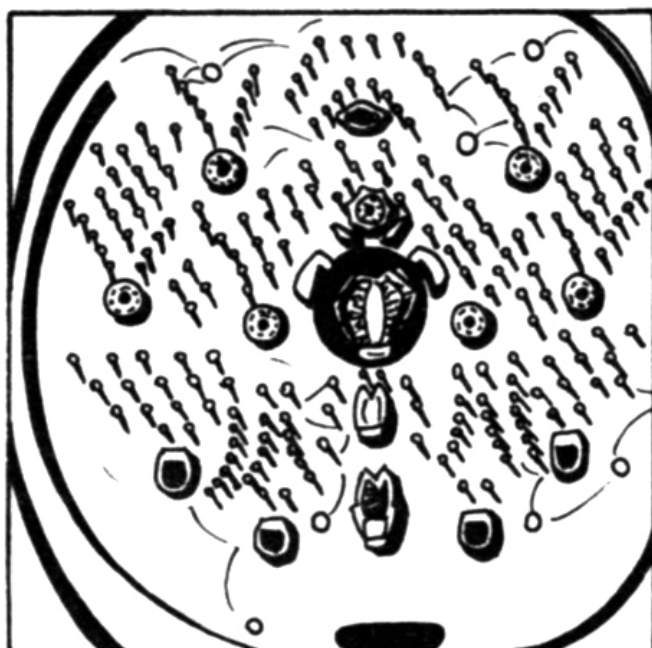
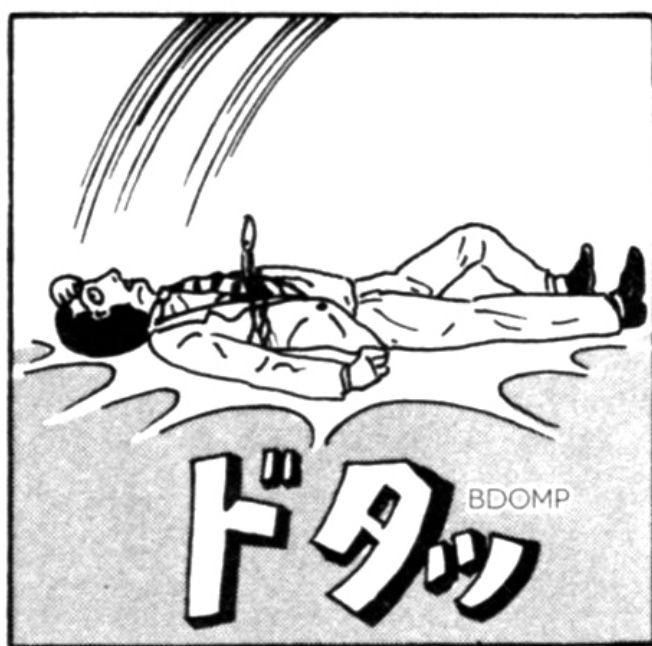
1975: A BRAVE AND BEAUTIFUL FAMILY IN RECESSIONARY AND SICKLY JAPAN



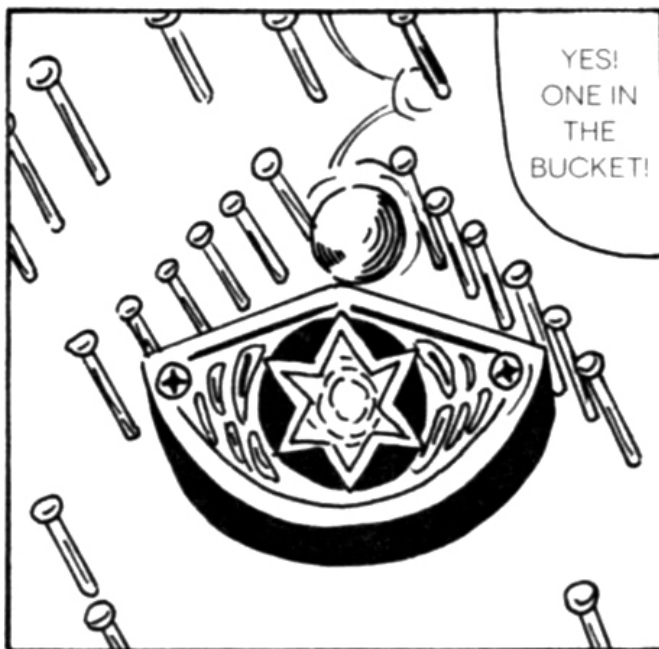
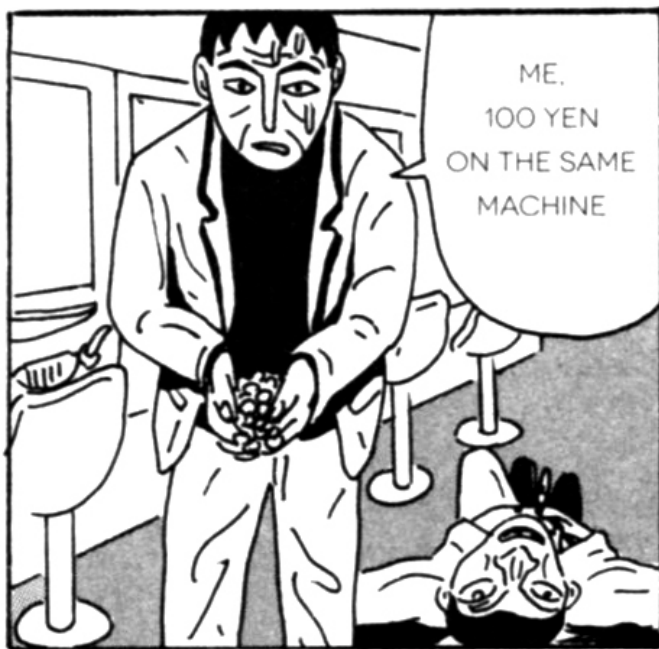
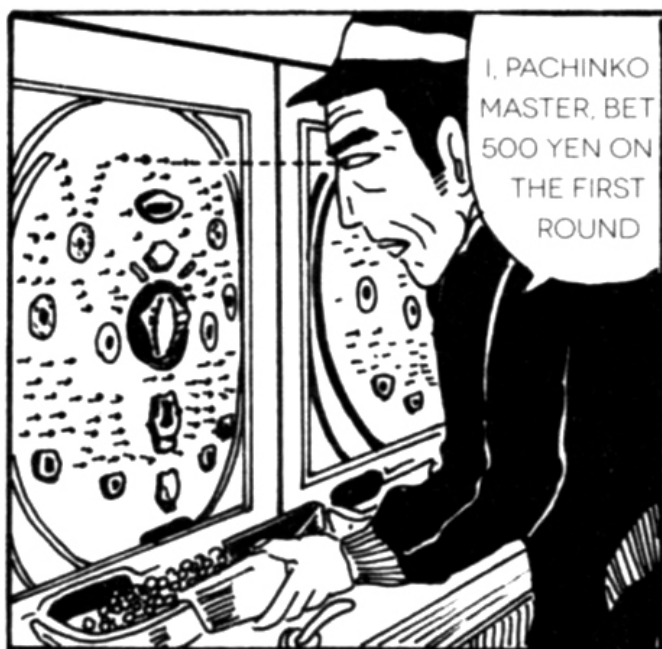
FUCK OFF

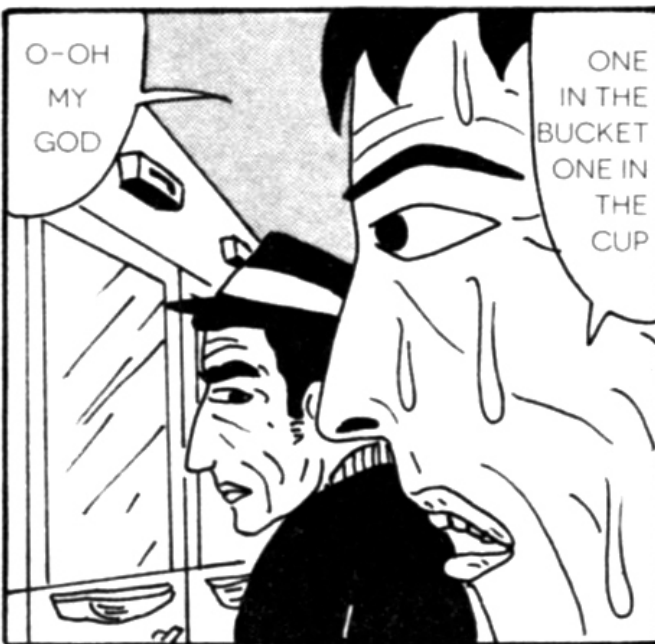
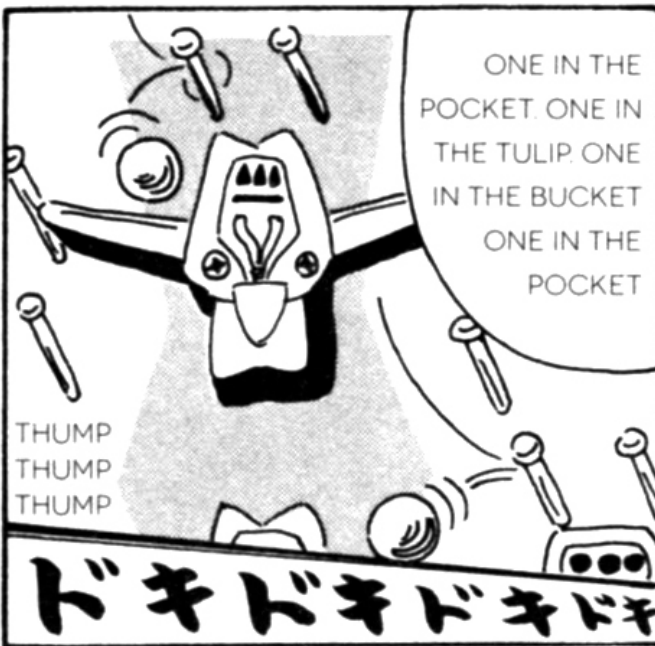
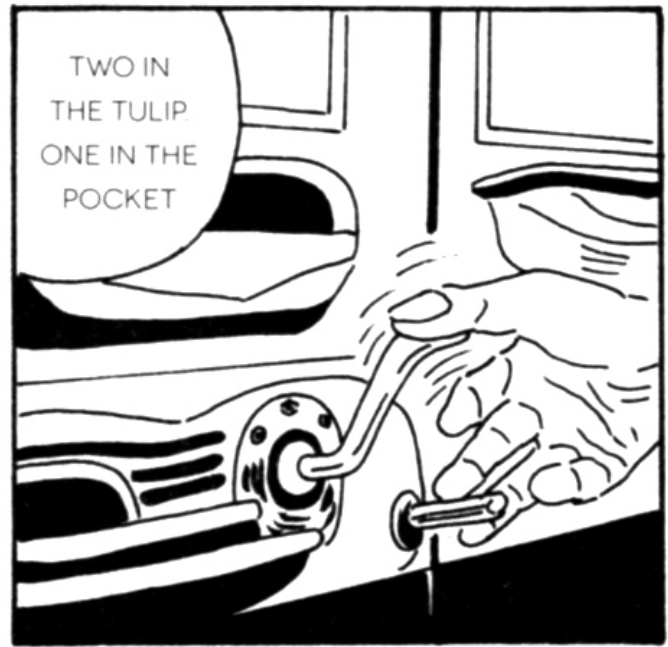
EBISU YOSHIKAZU

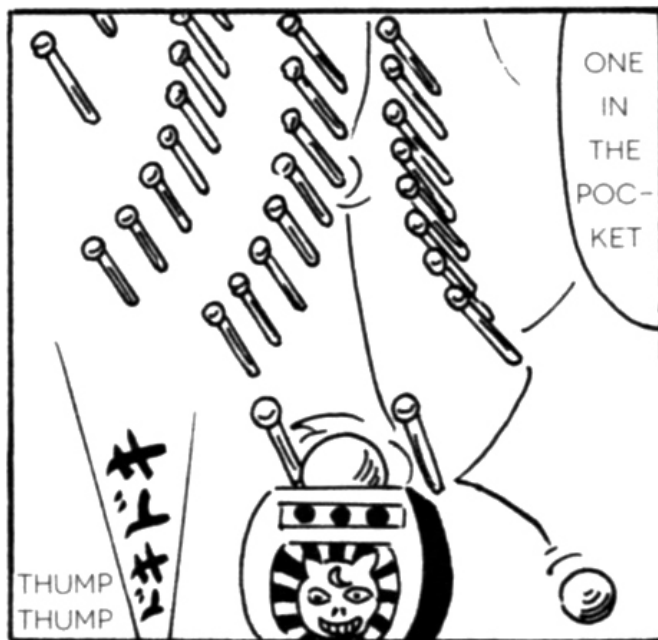






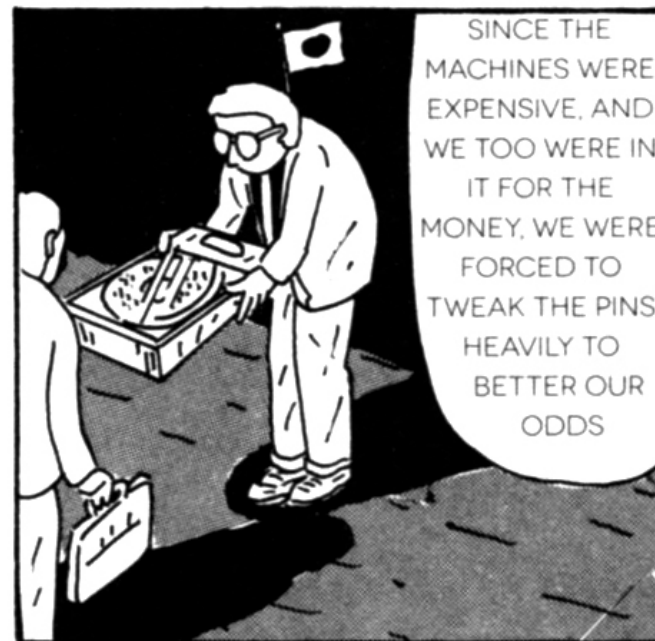
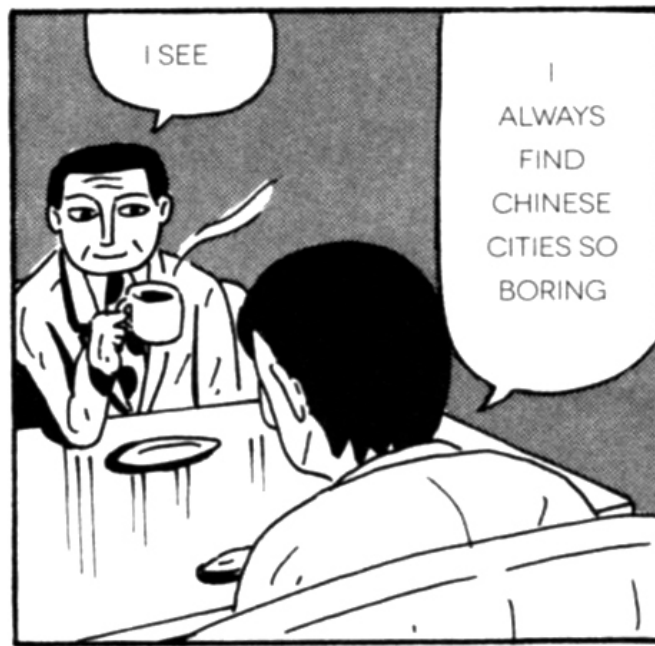






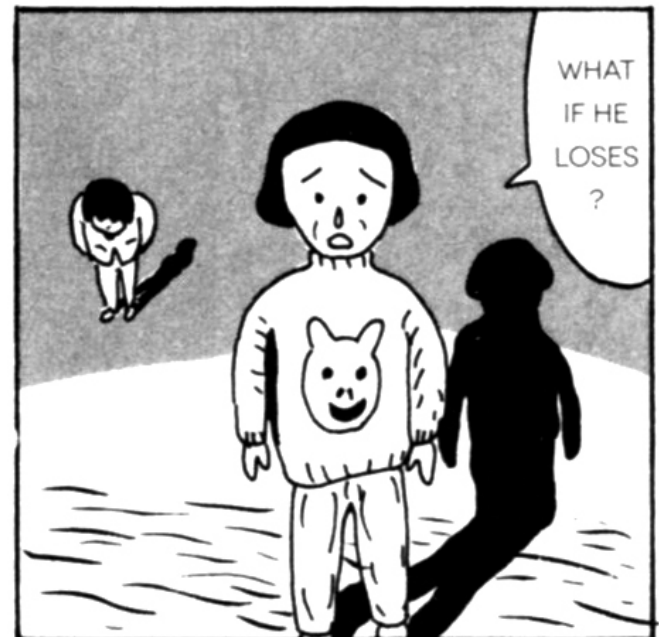
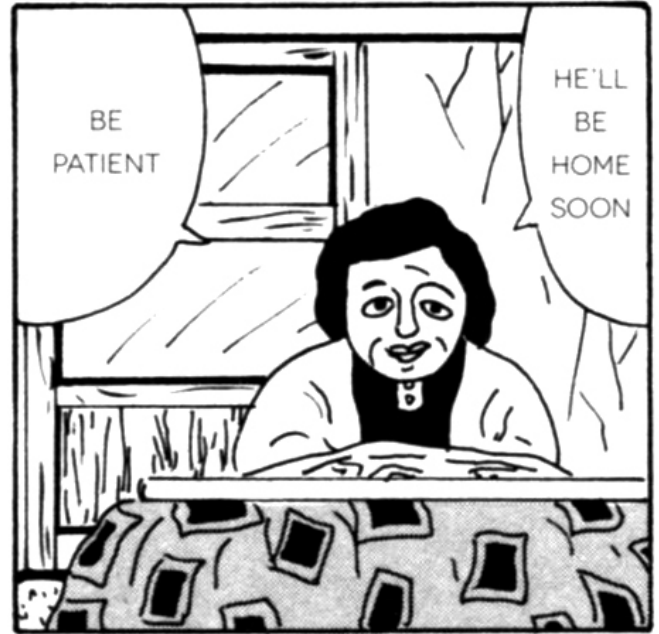
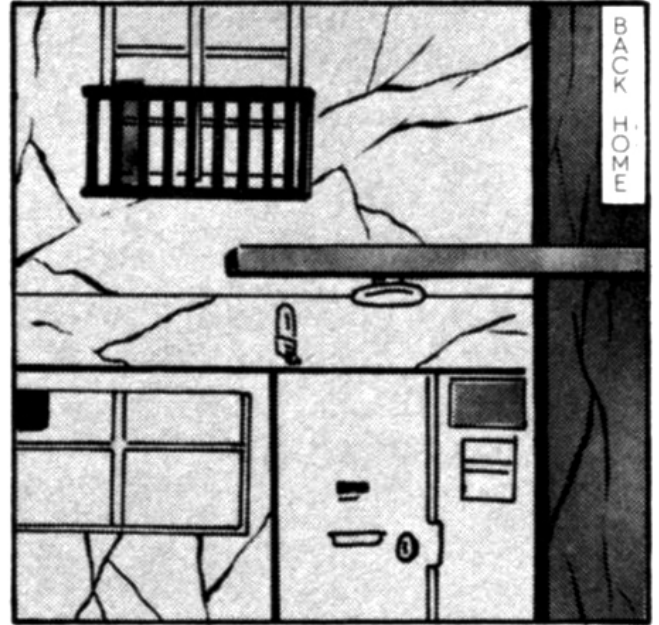




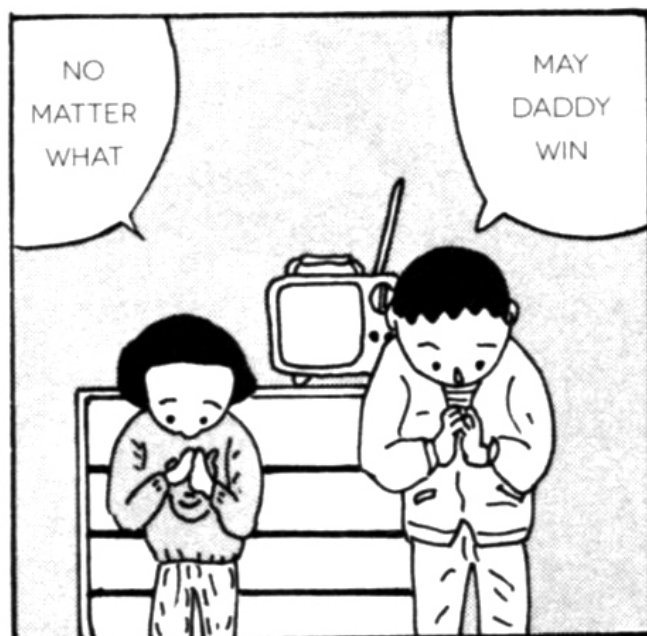
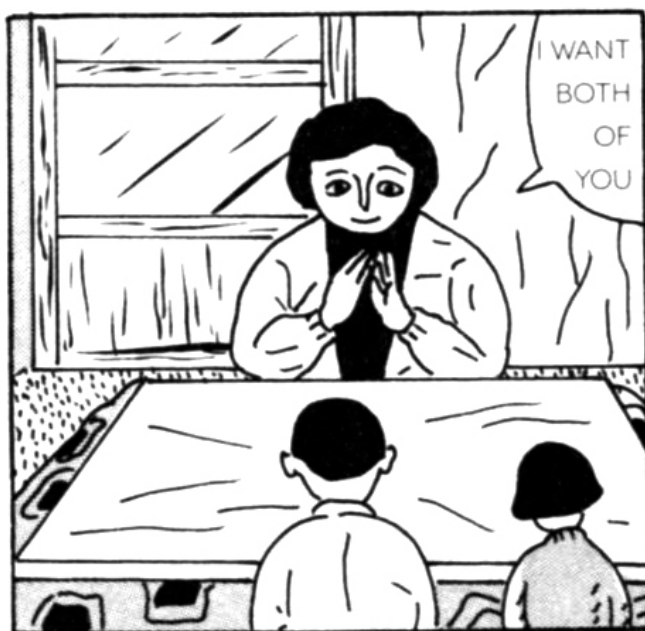


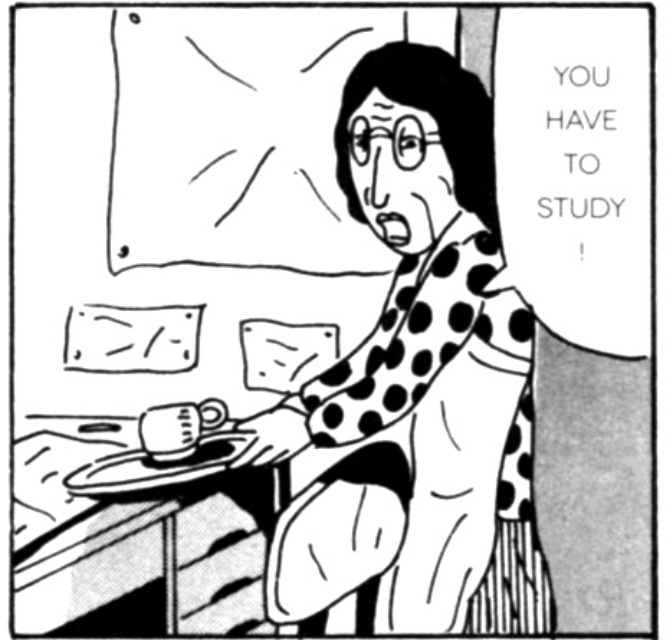


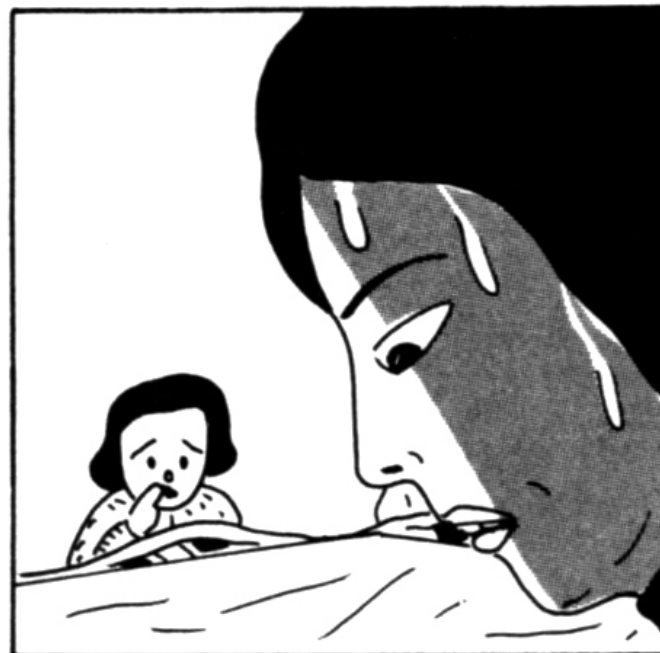
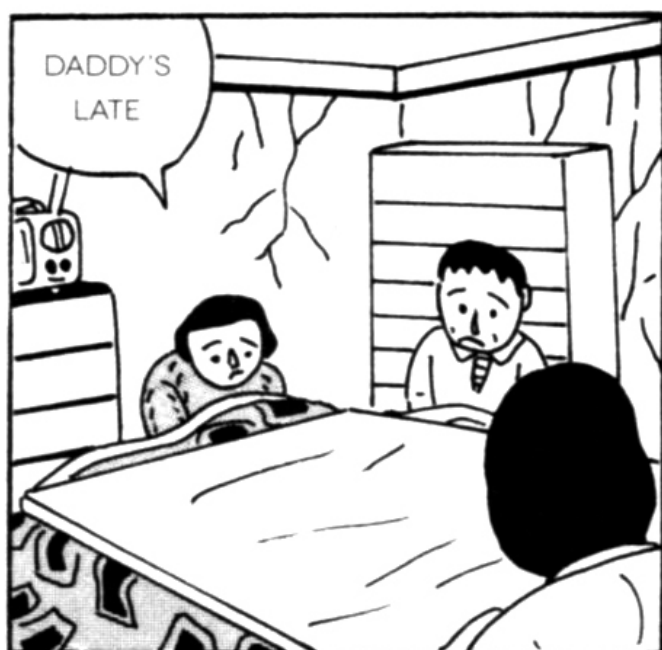


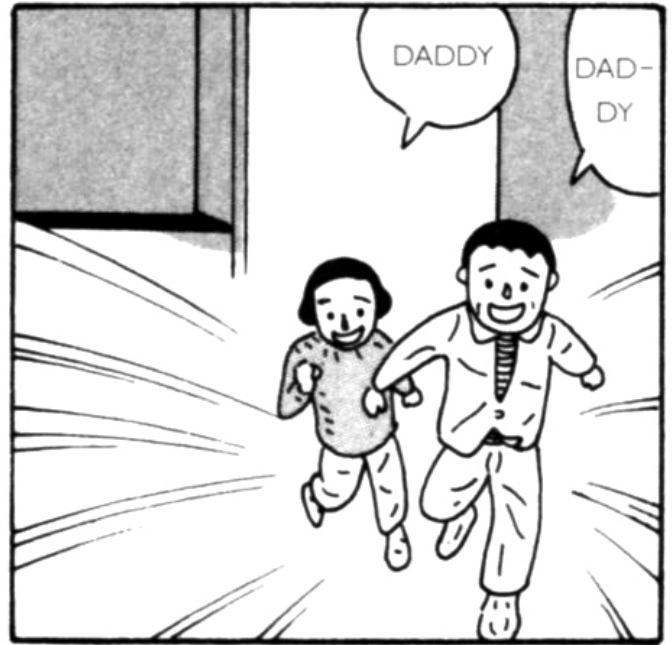






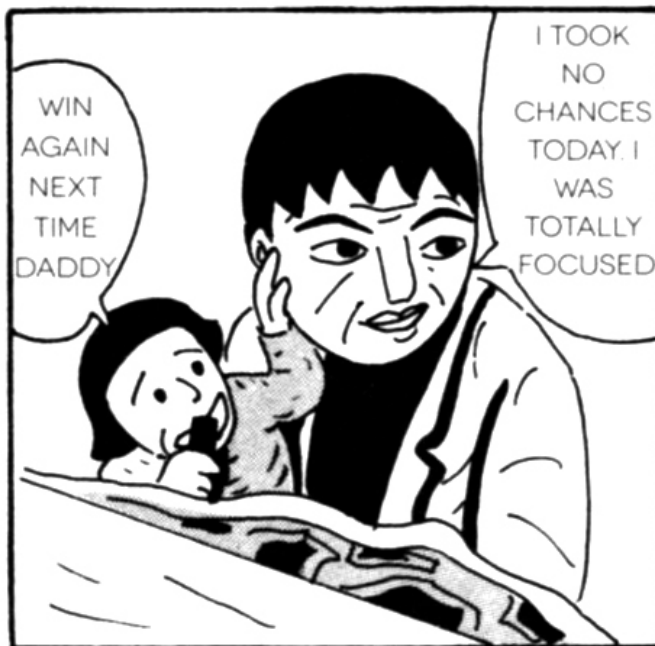
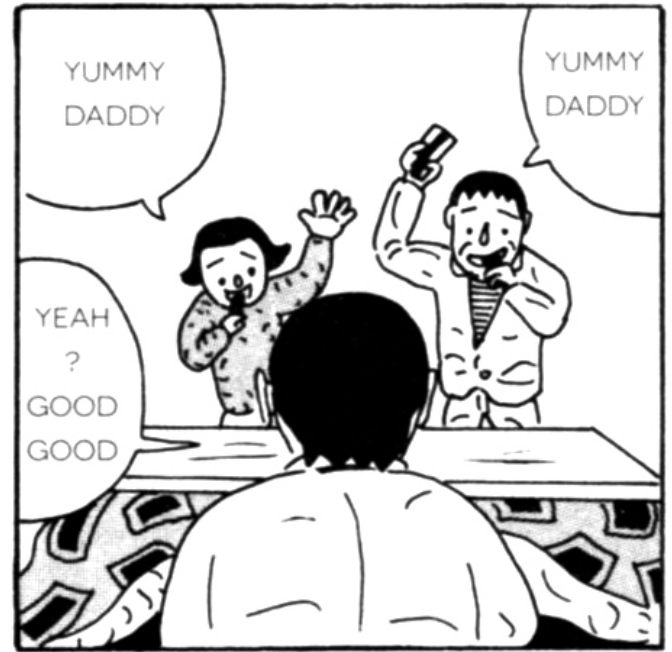
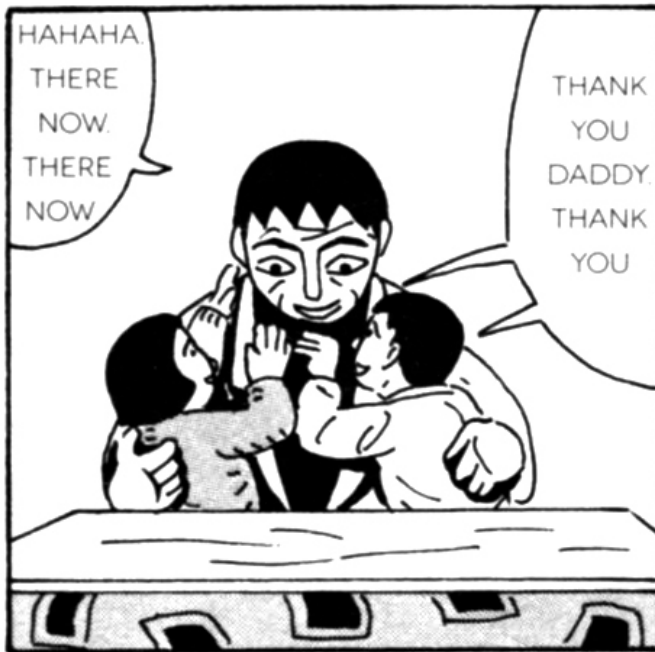


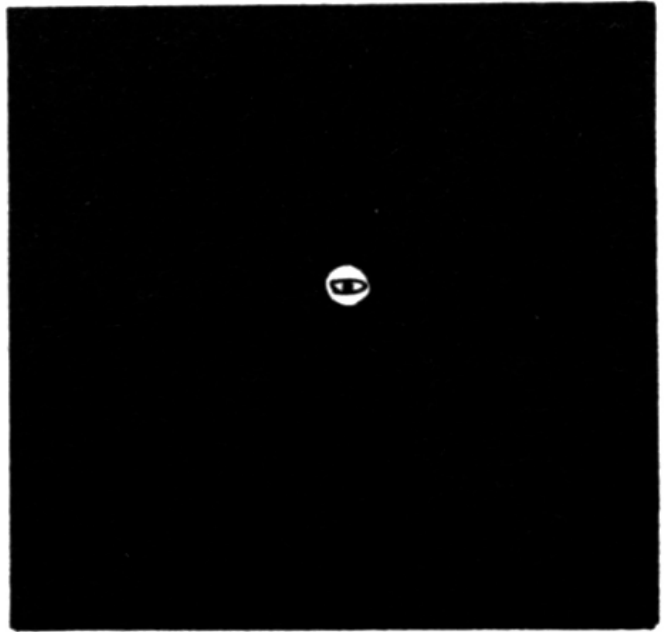




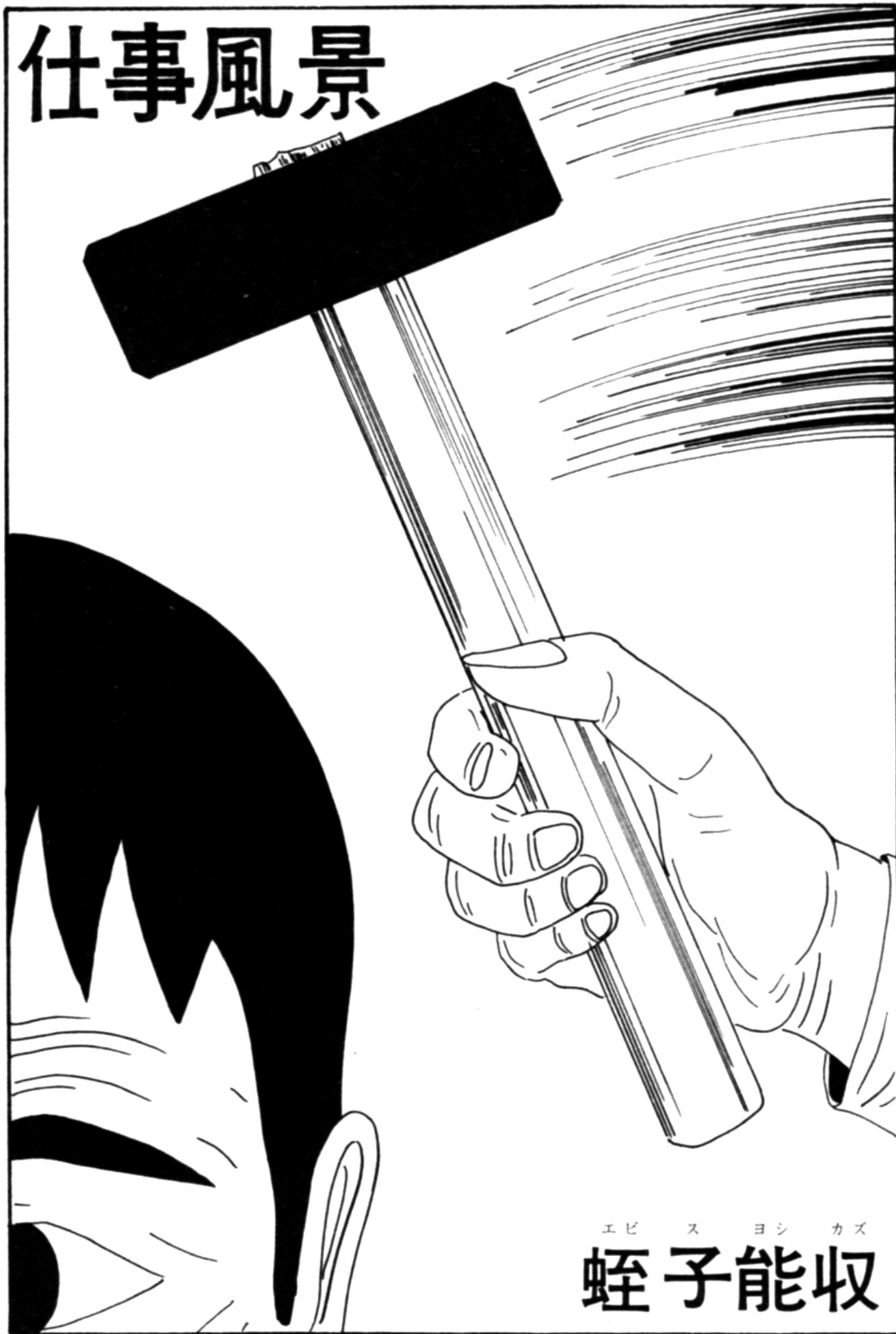








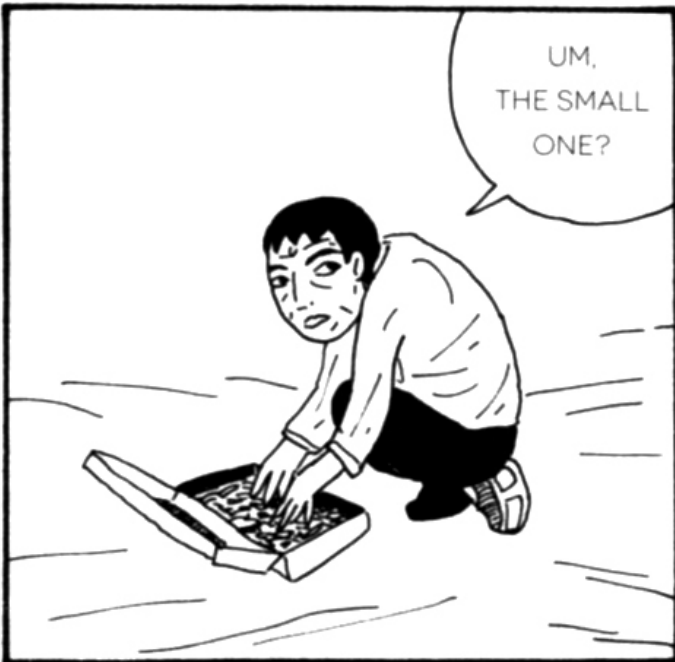
# 仕事風景



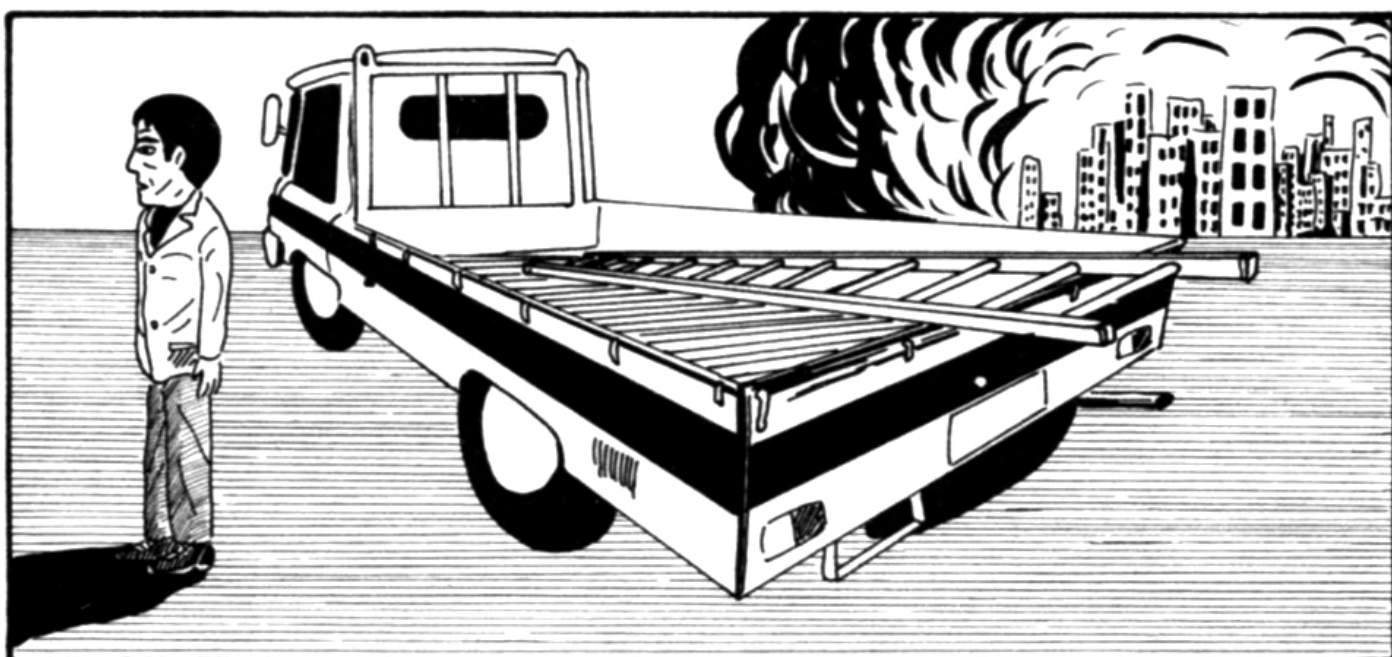
エビ ス ヨシ カズ  
蛭子能収

EBISU YOSHIKAZU











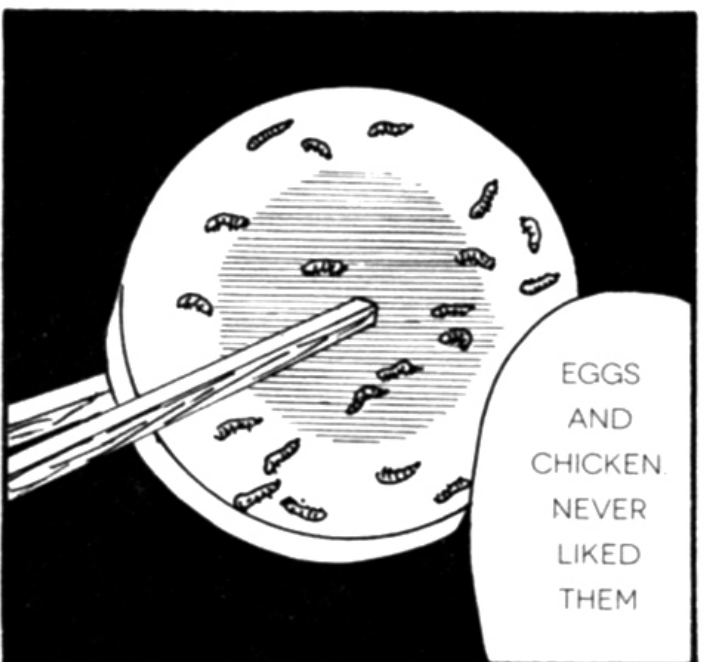
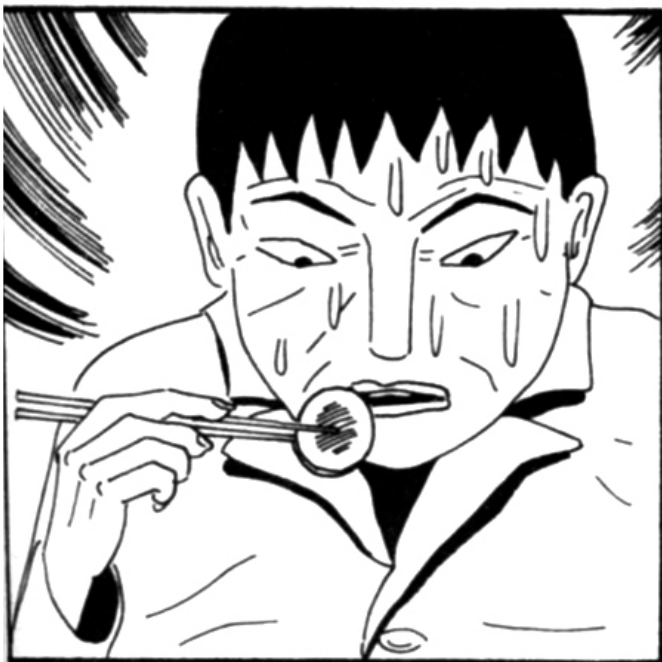
RAMEN

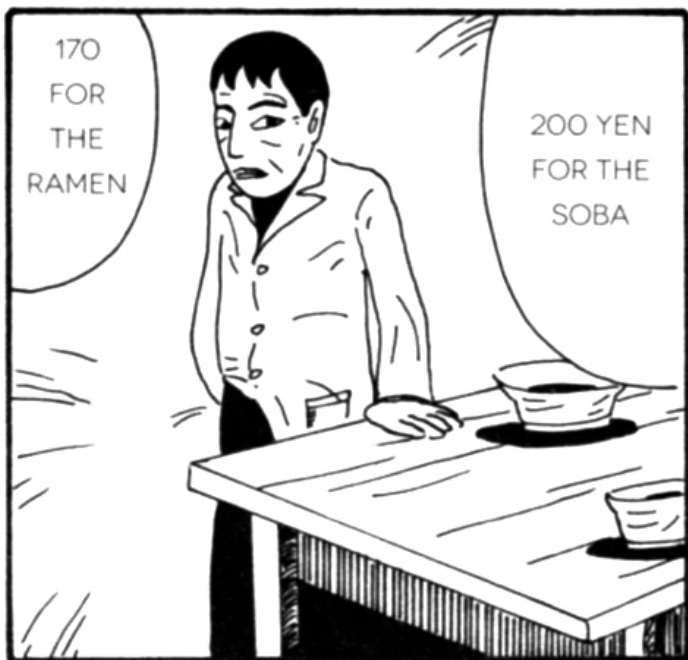


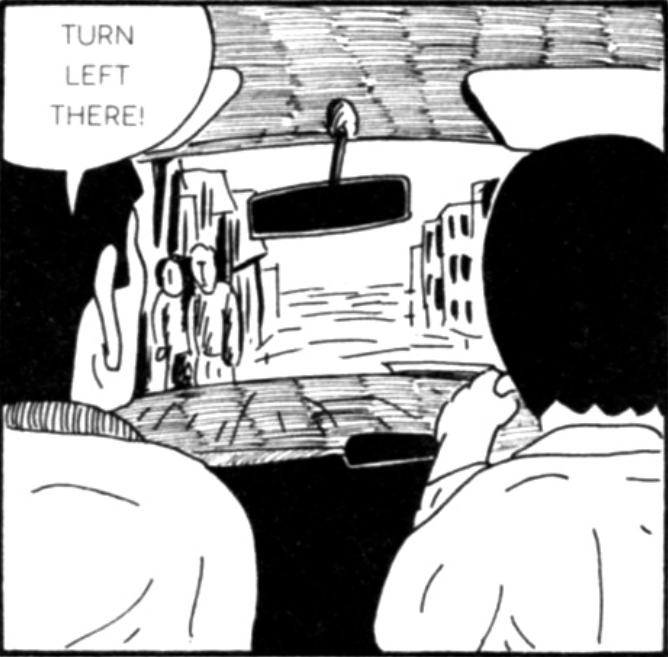
SIGNS: RAMEN 100, YAKISOBA 150, TANMEN 130



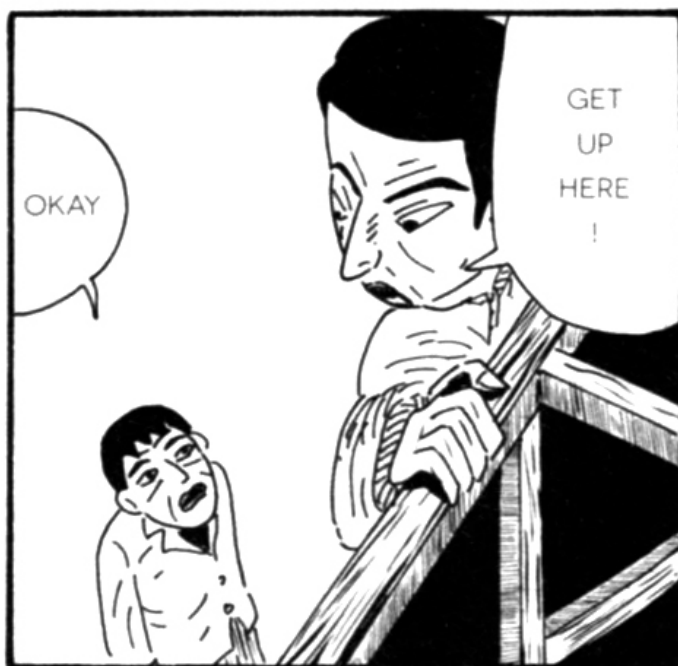
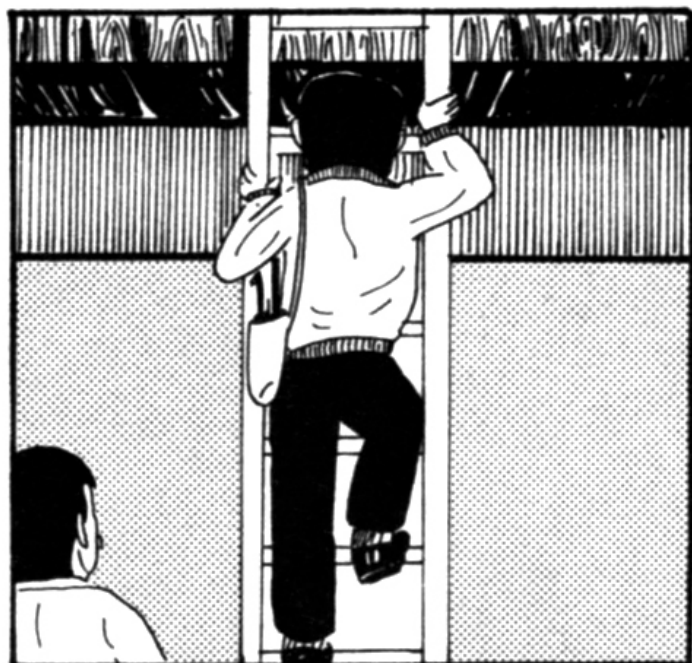




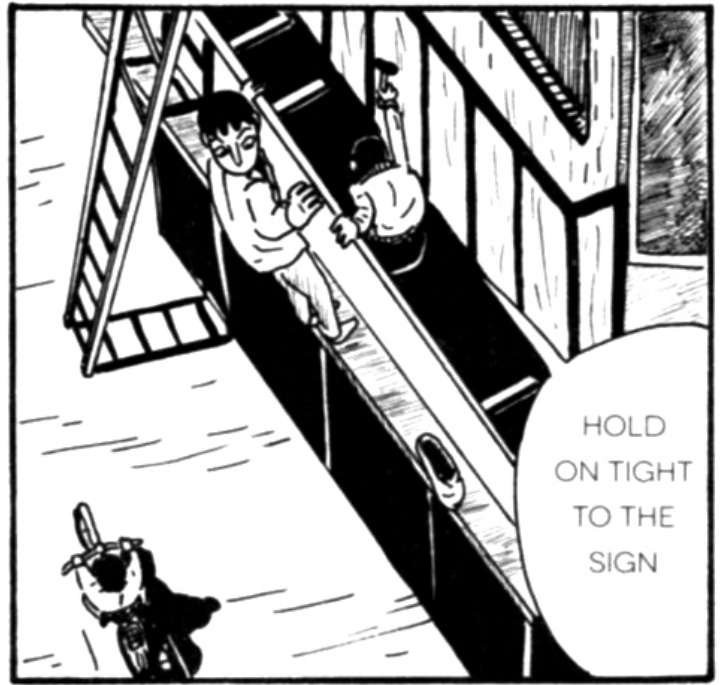
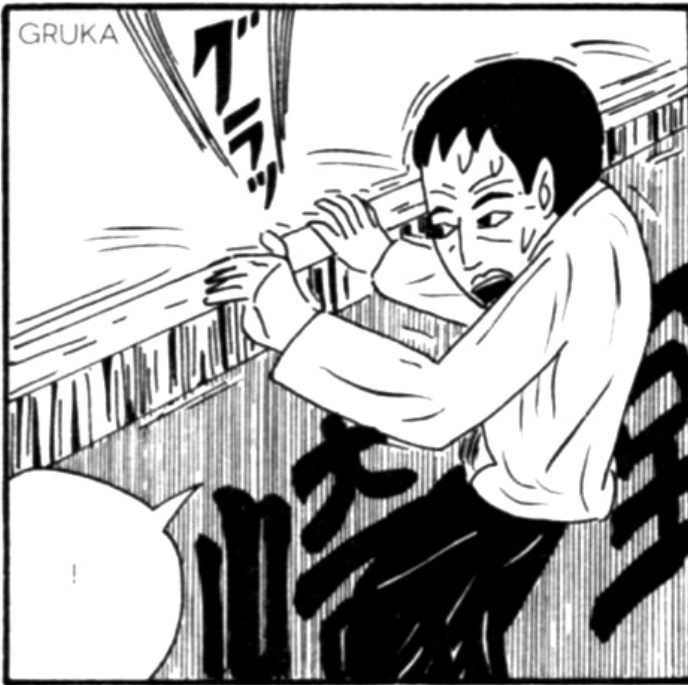
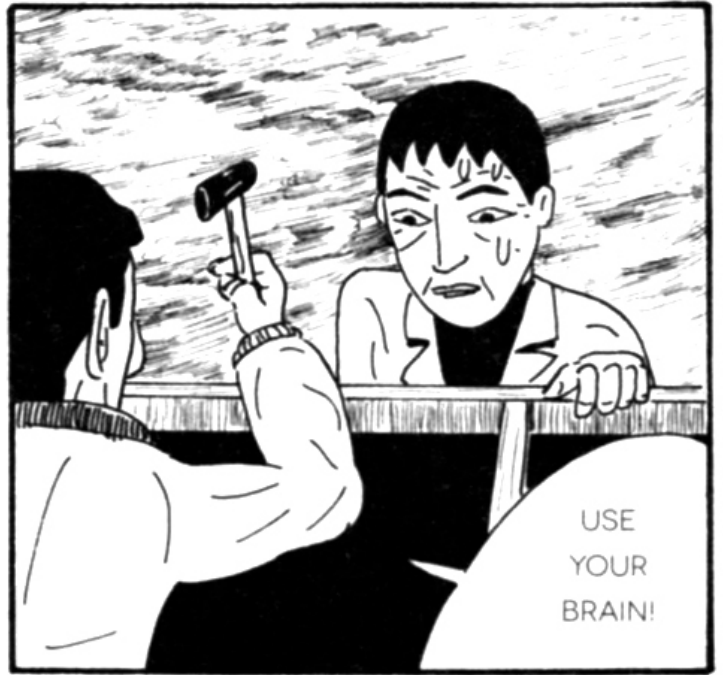


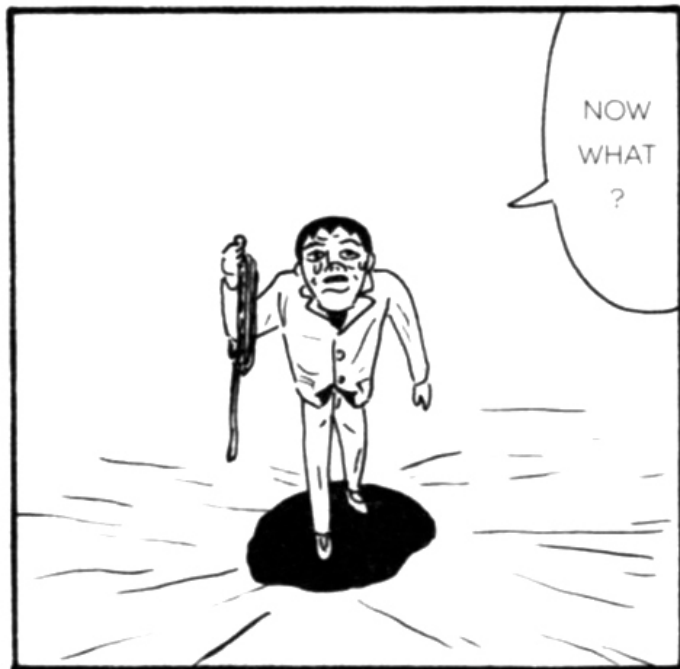


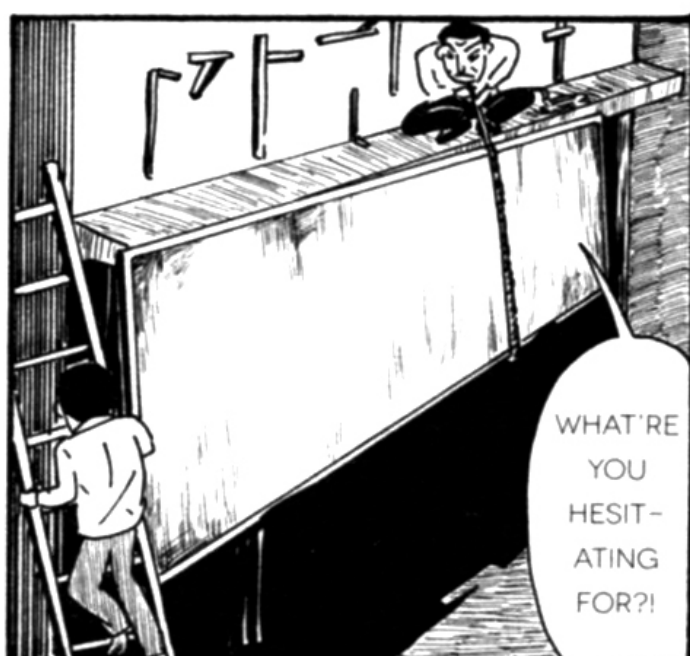
NAGASAKI-DO  
OLD BOOKS, PICTURES, AND NEWSPAPERS

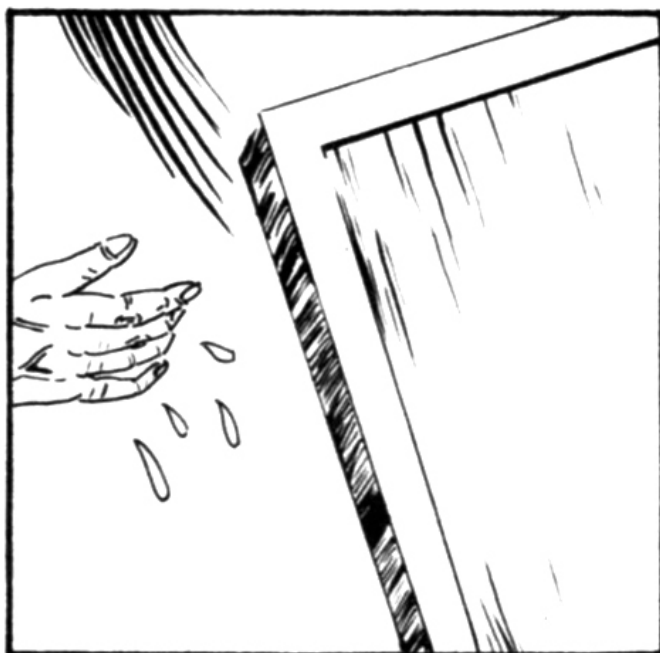




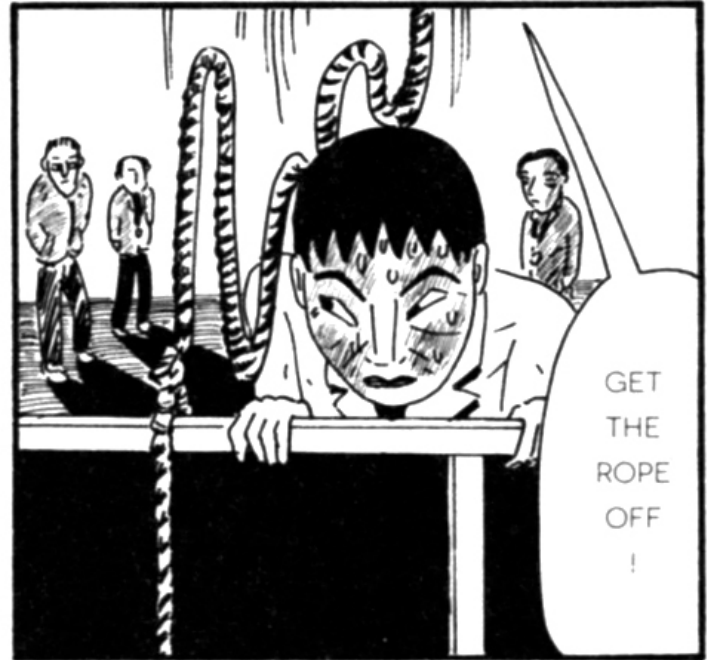
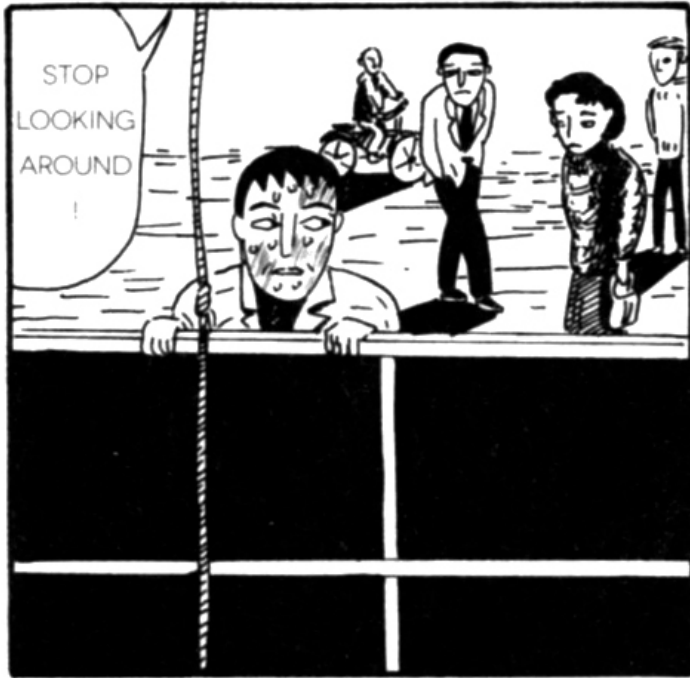






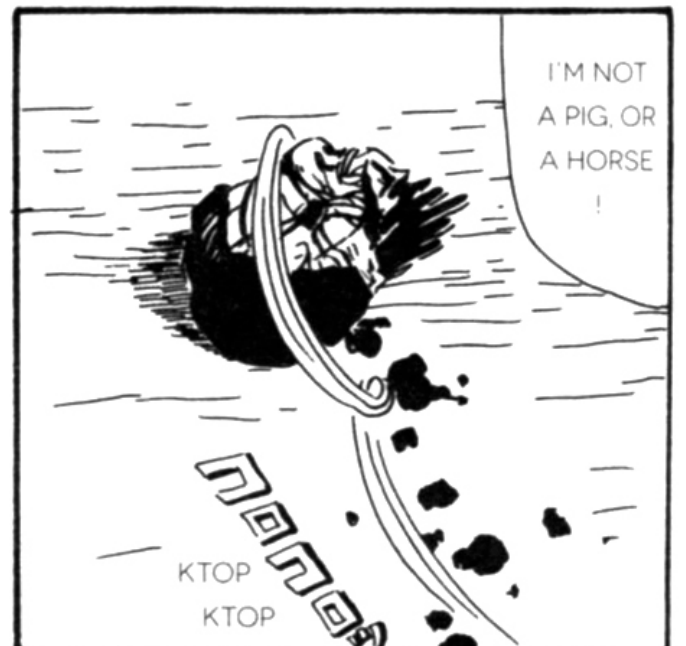
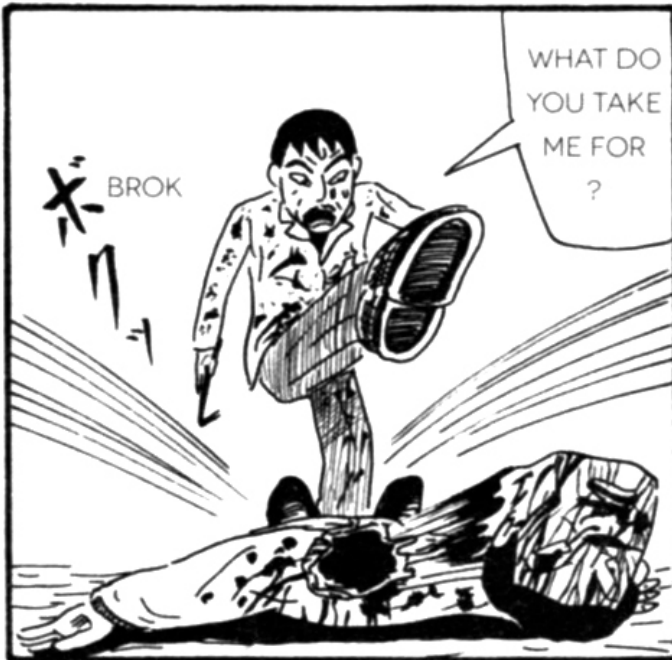






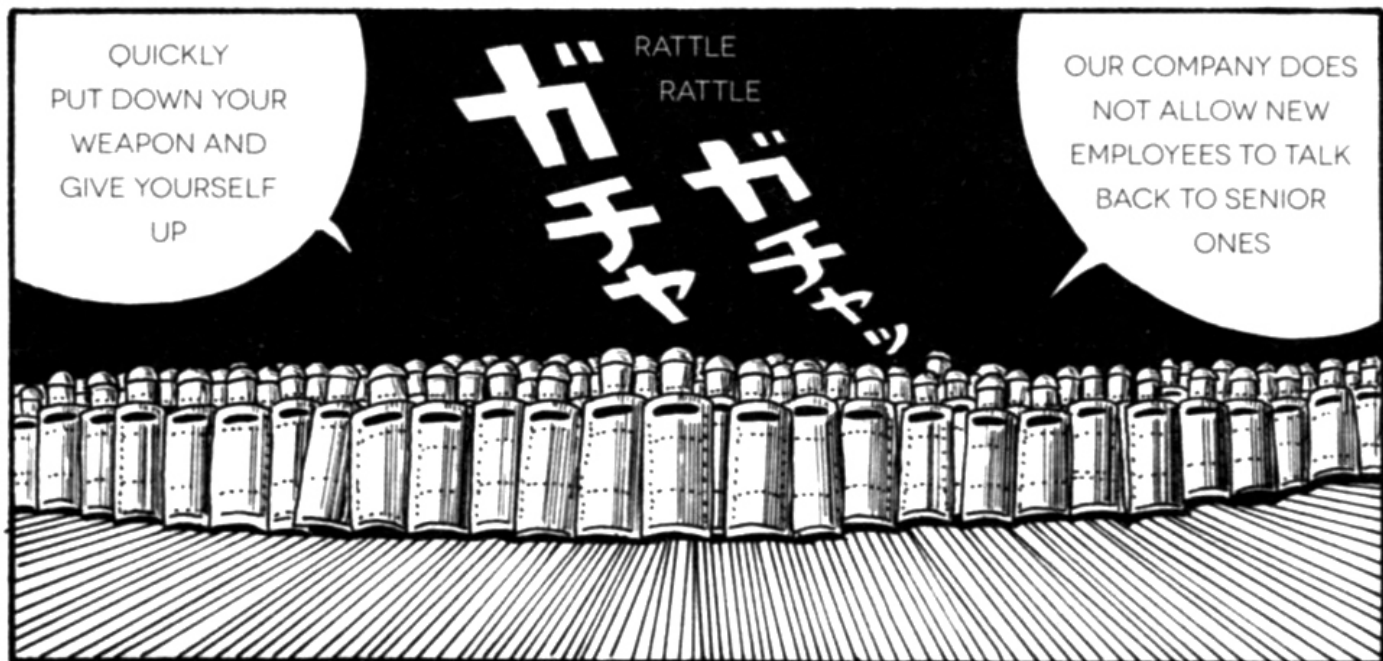














END

INDIVIDUAL

COMPANY



疲れる社員たち



蛭子能収

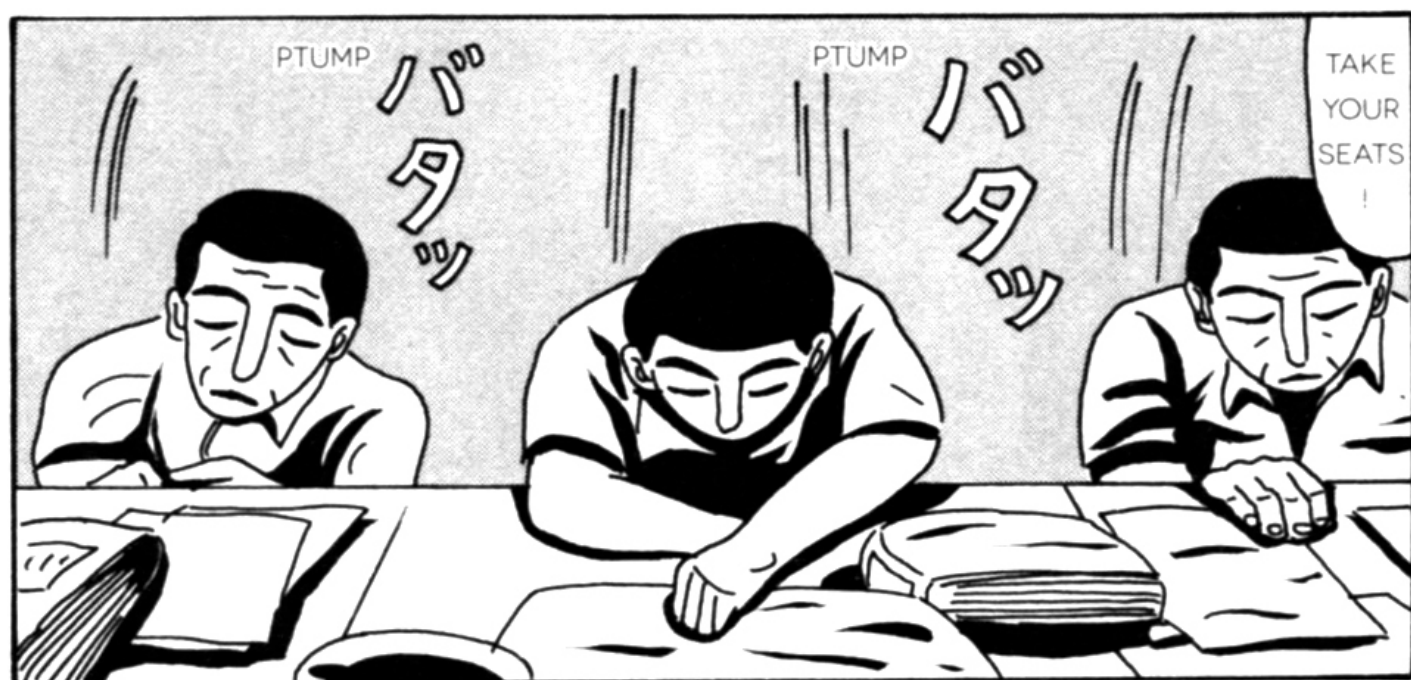
WIPED OUT WORKERS

EBISU YOSHIKAZU

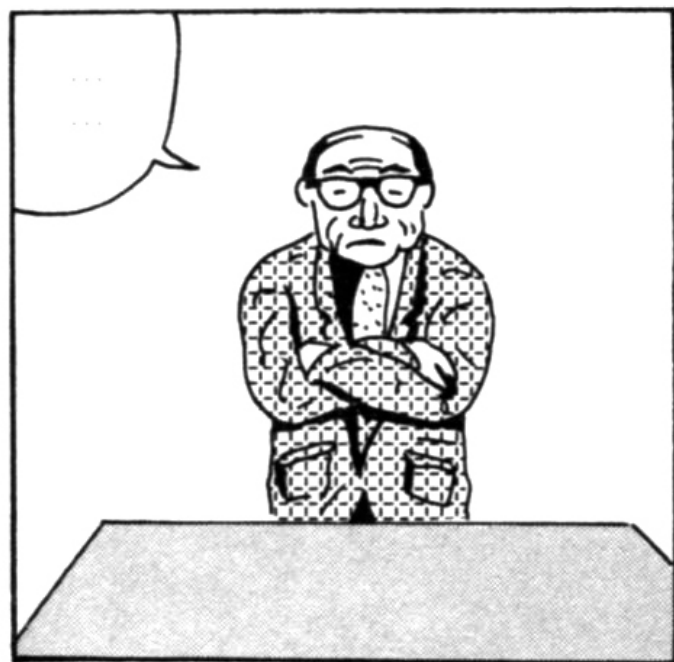
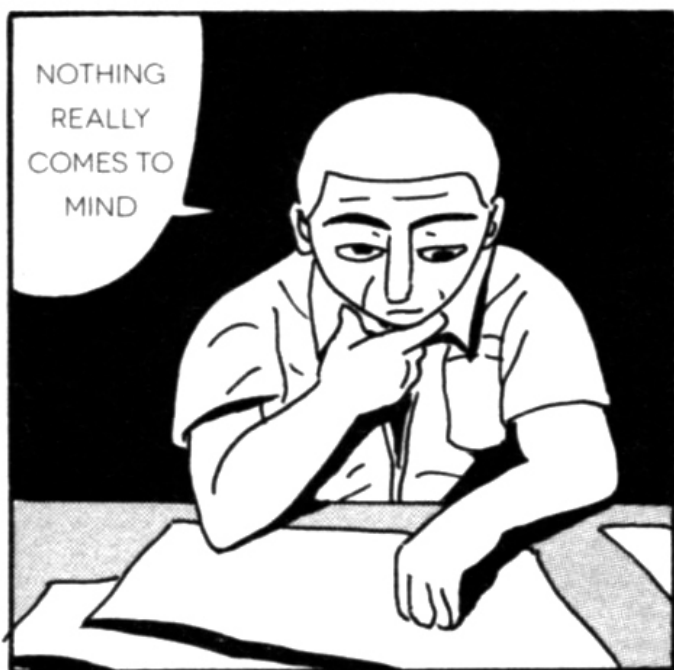
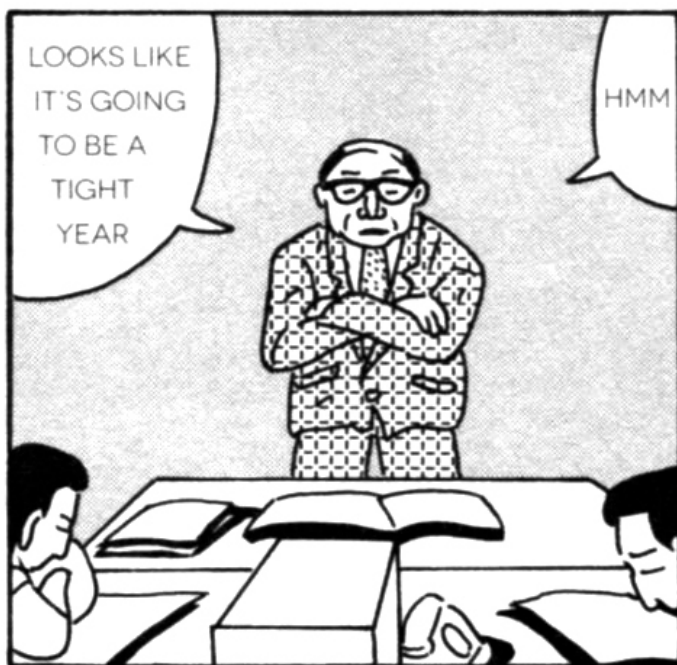
BUSINESS

FATIGUE









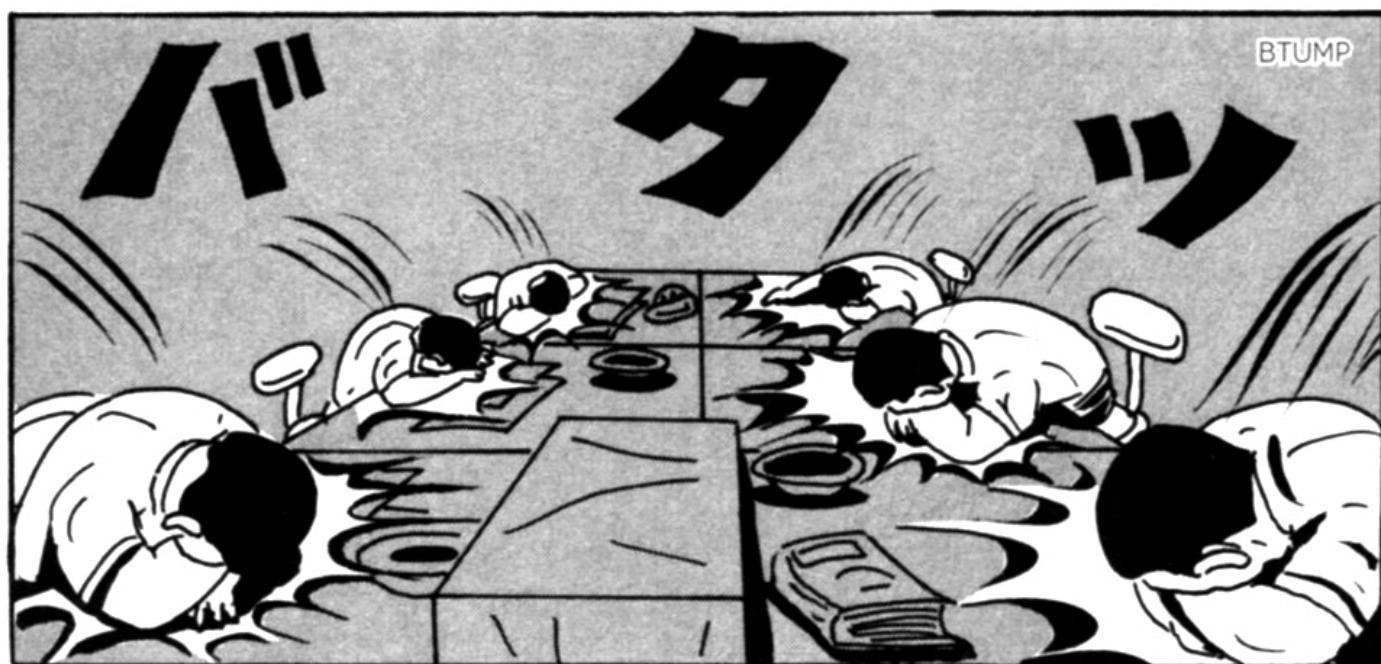
必勝!! 高収入は努力のみ



THAT'S  
ALL  
FROM  
ACC-  
OUNTS

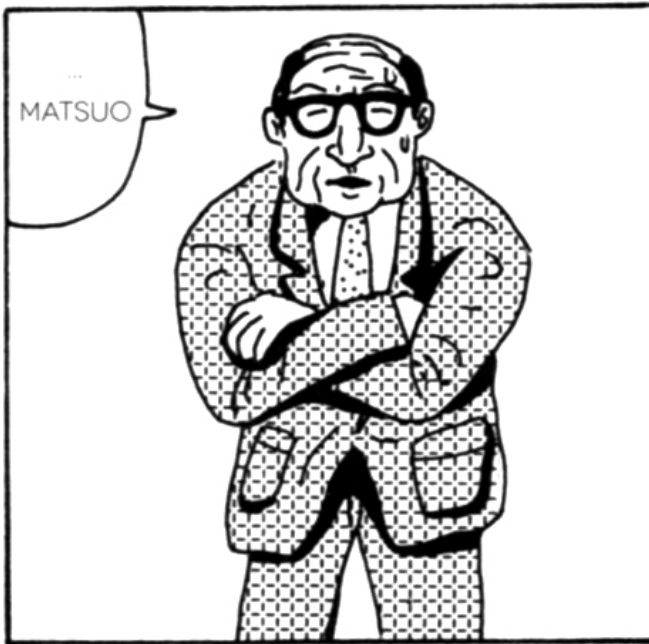


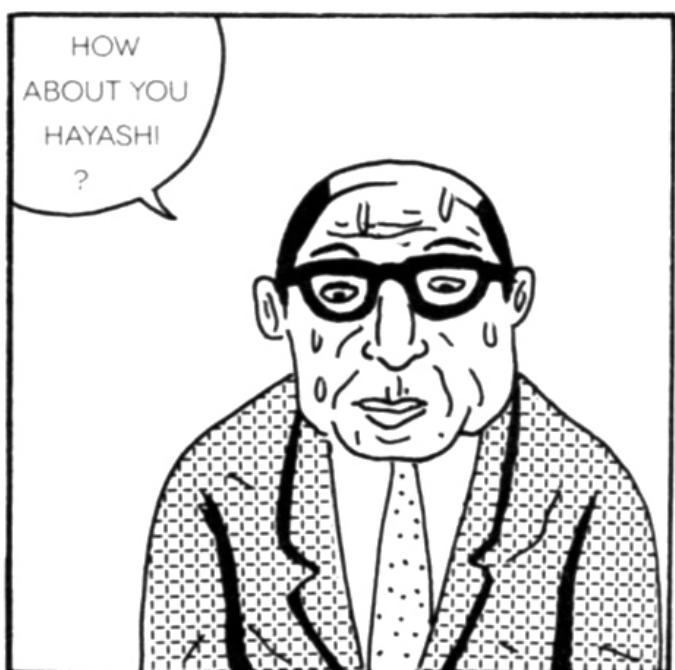
I KNOW  
THINGS ARE  
TOUGH, BUT IT'S  
IMPORTANT TO  
FIND A NEW CON-  
TRACT FOR EVERY-  
ONE WE LOSE. THE  
COMPANY COUNTS  
ON THE SALES  
DIVISION

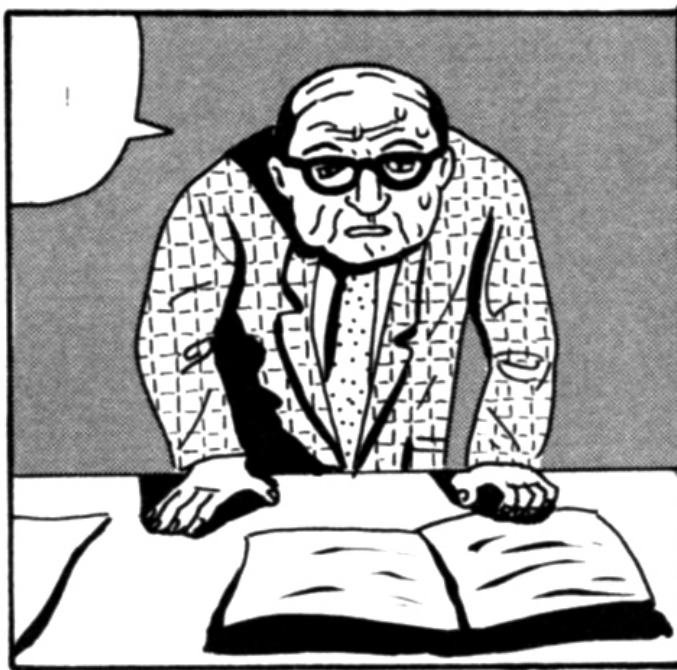


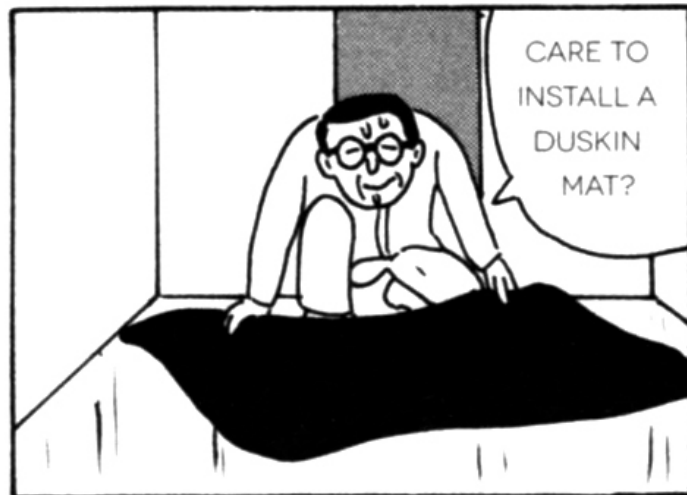
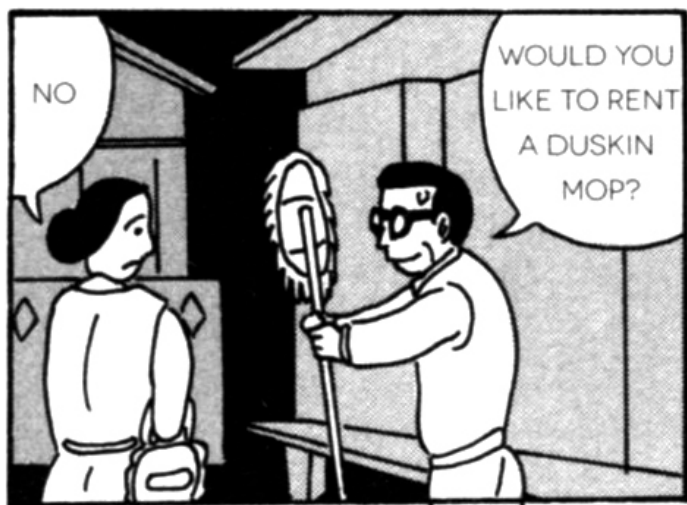
BTUMP



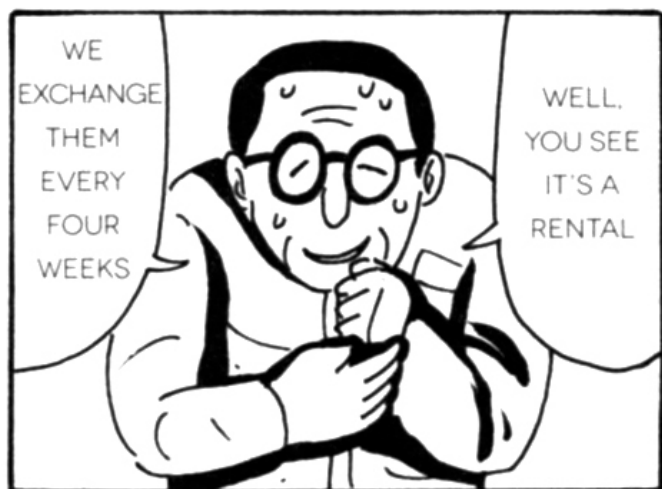
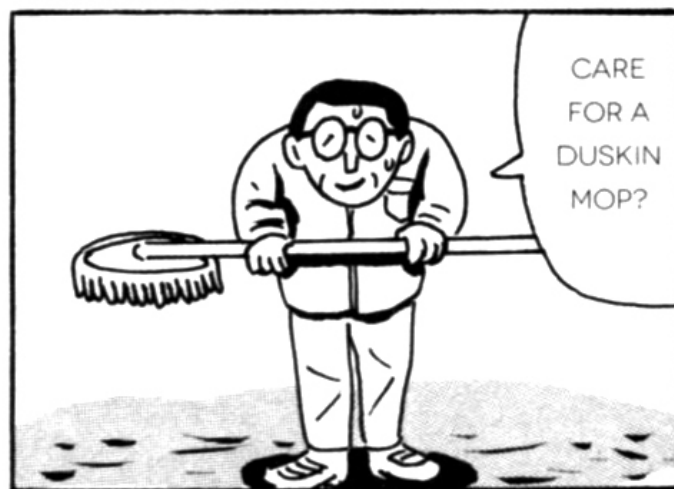






















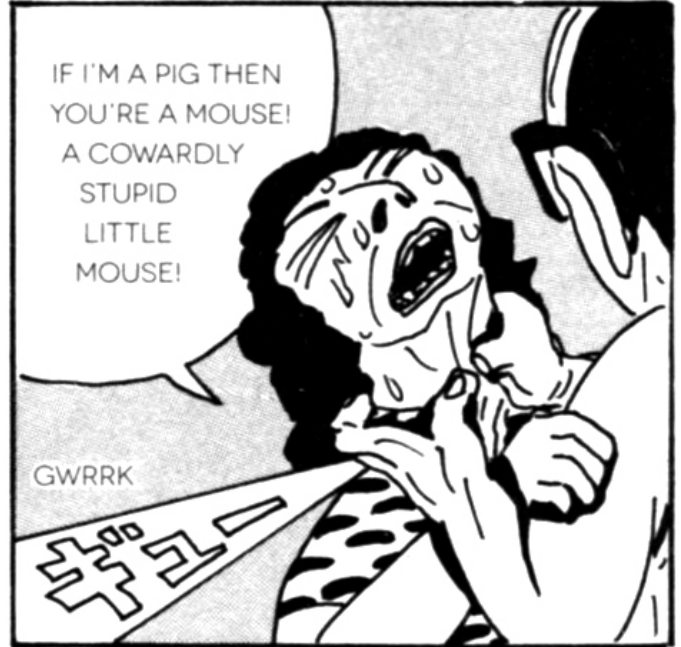


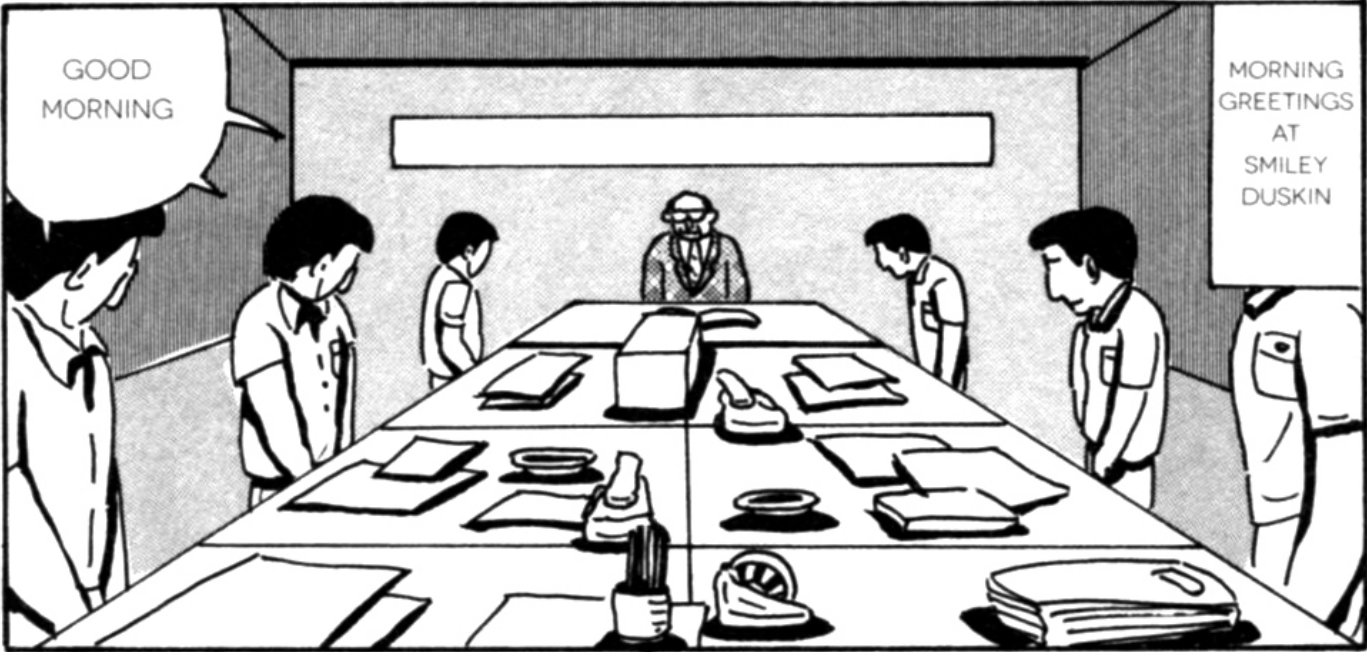
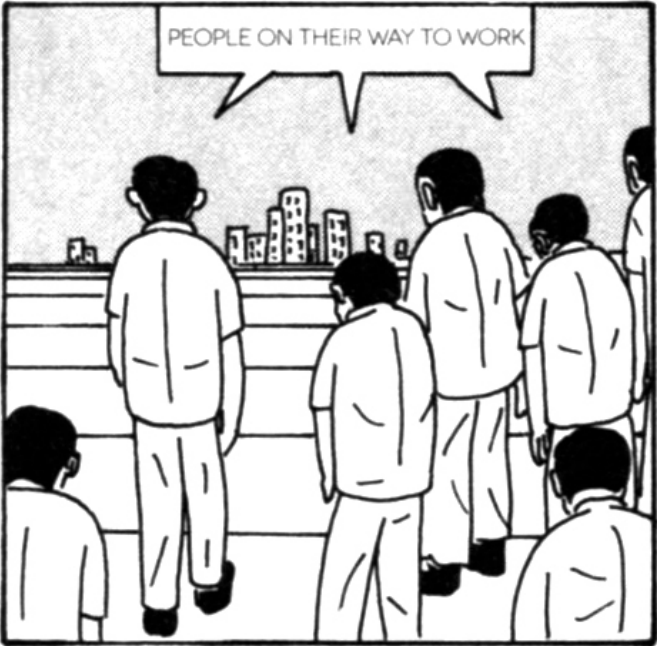


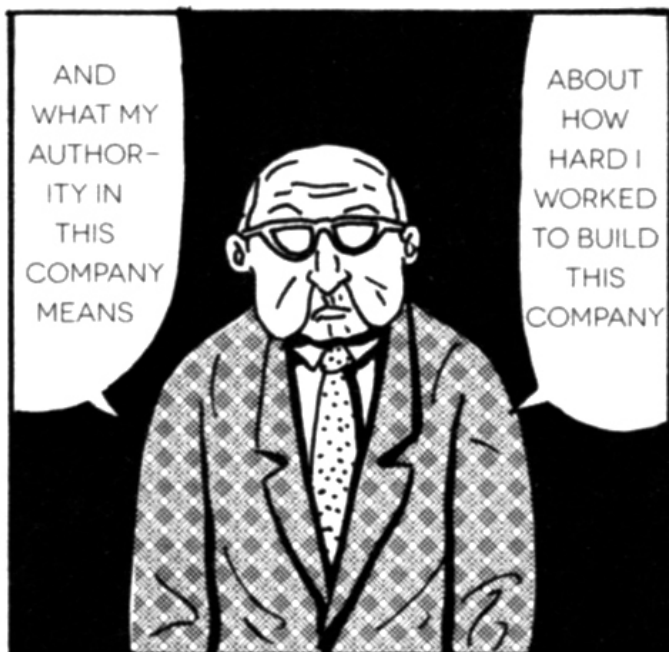




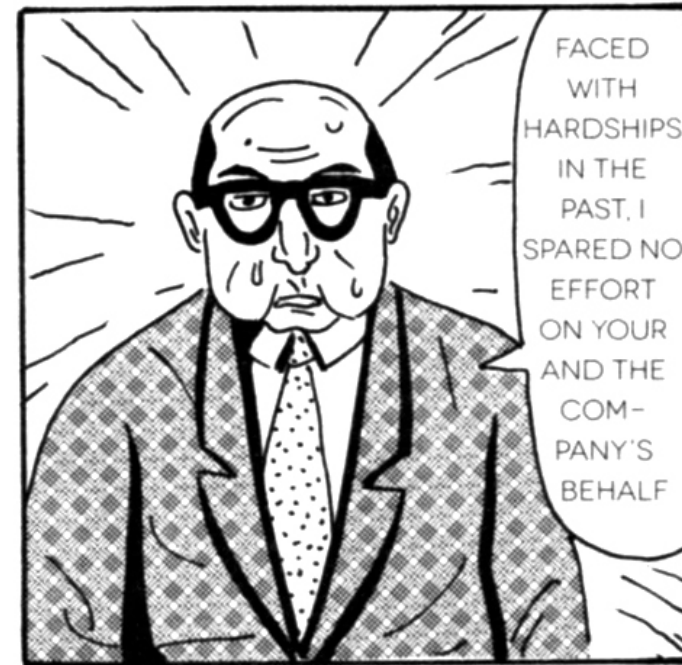
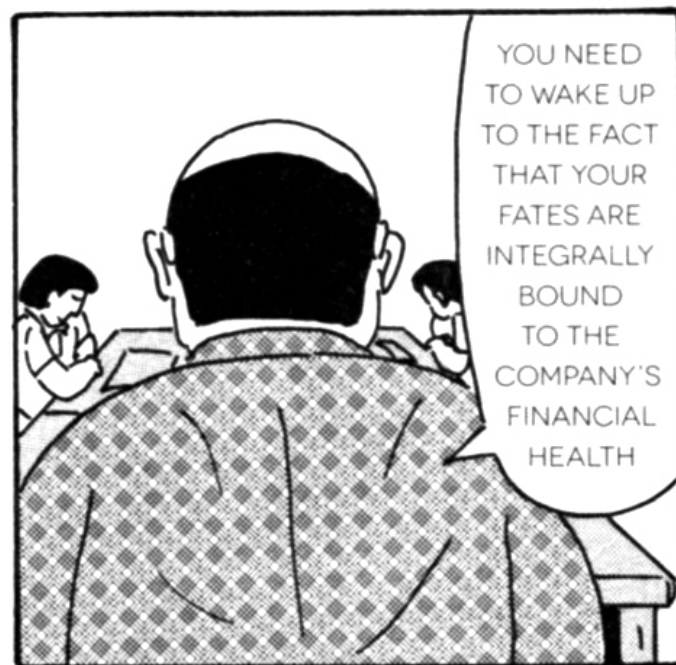
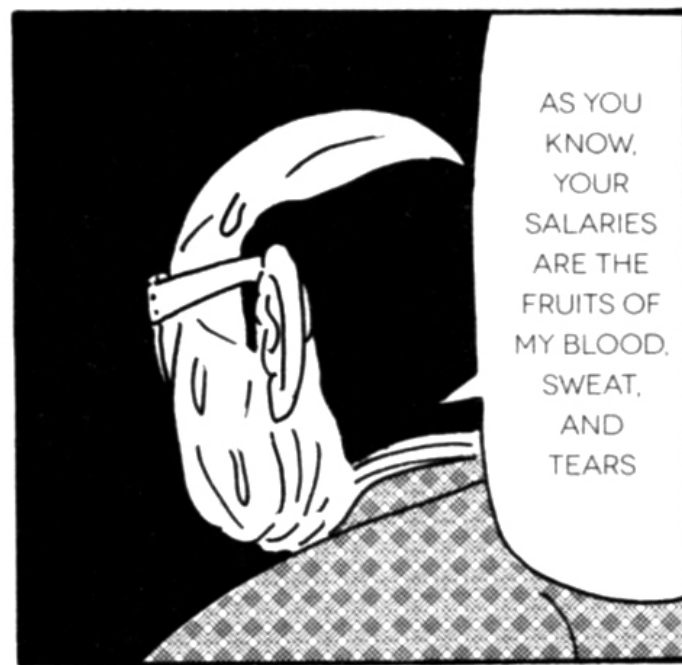


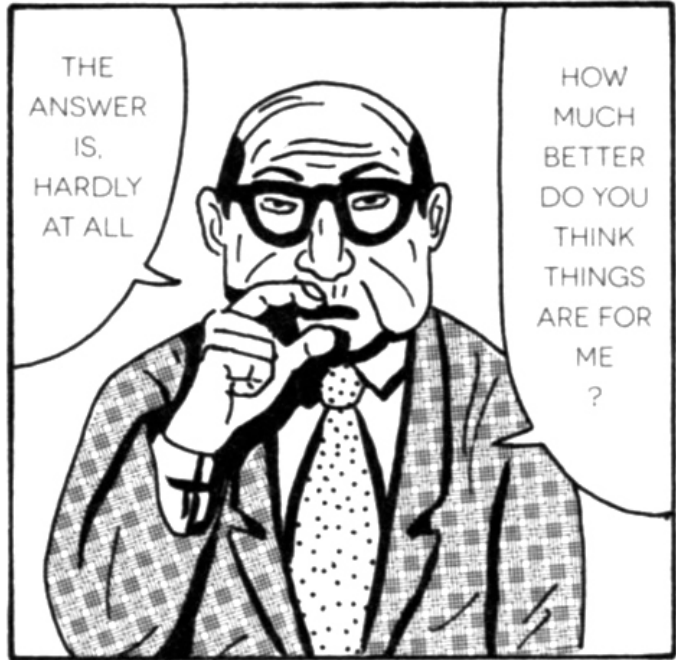
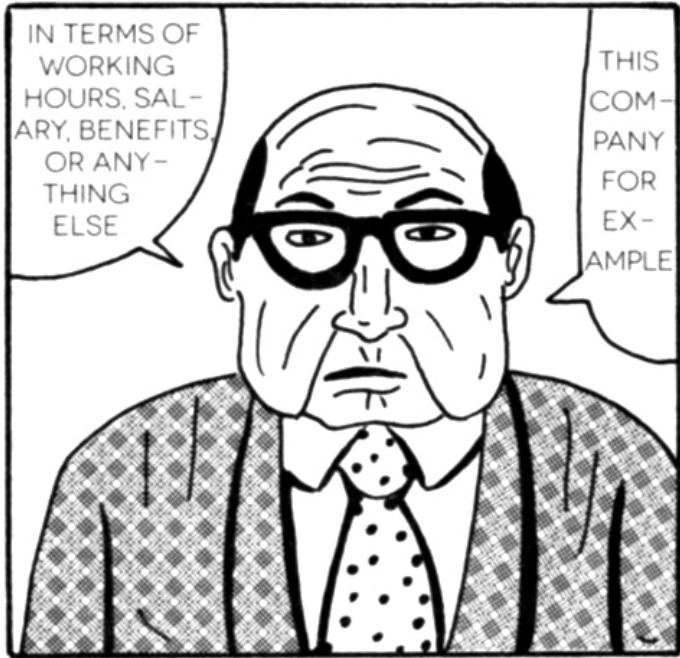




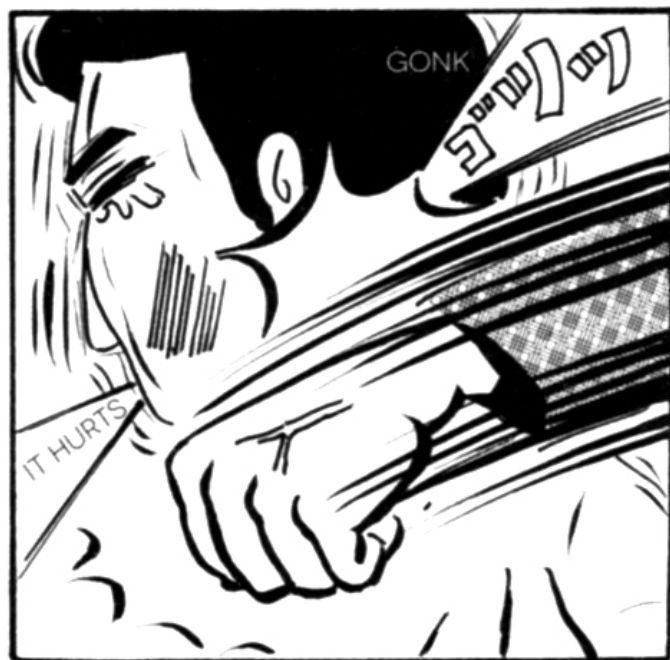
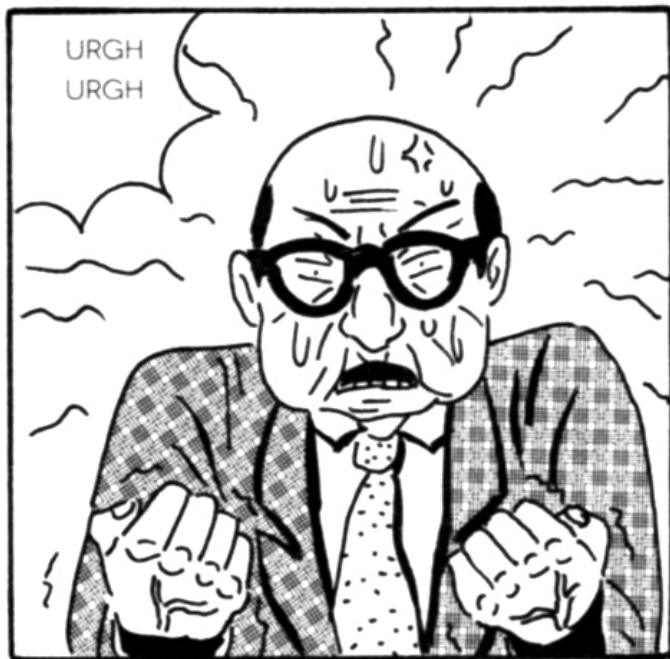




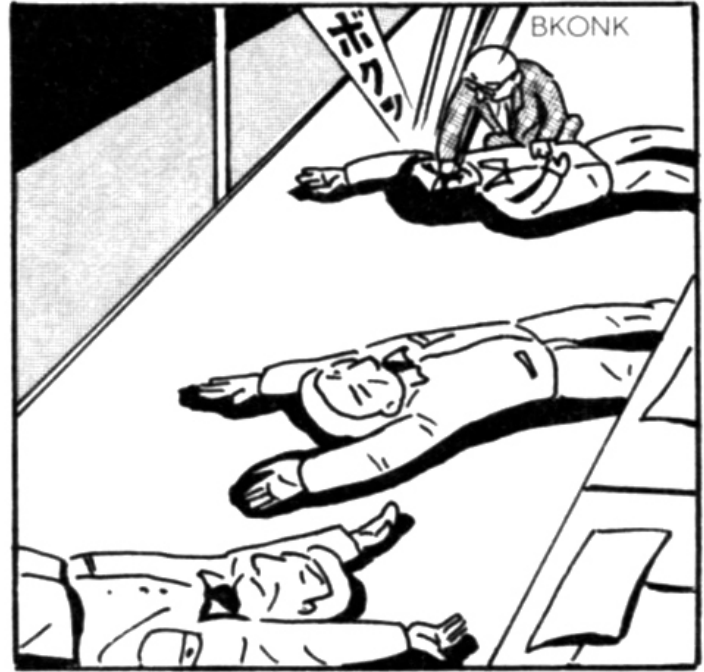
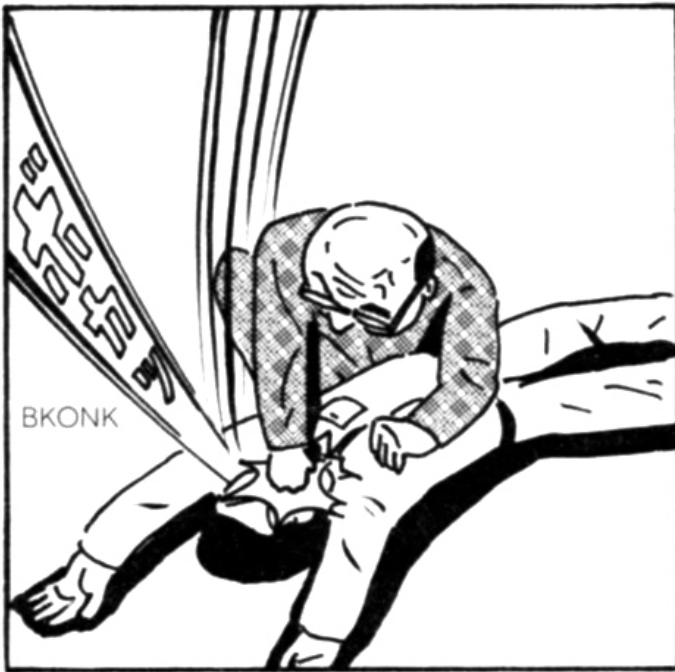


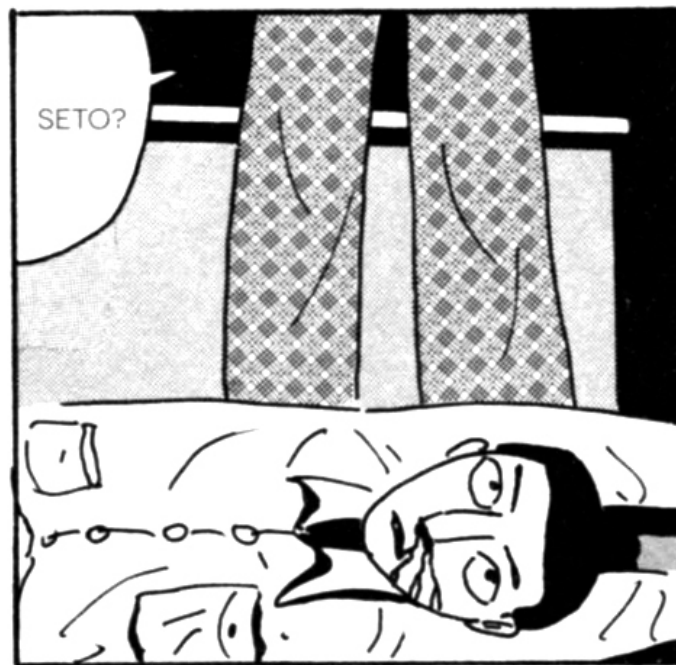


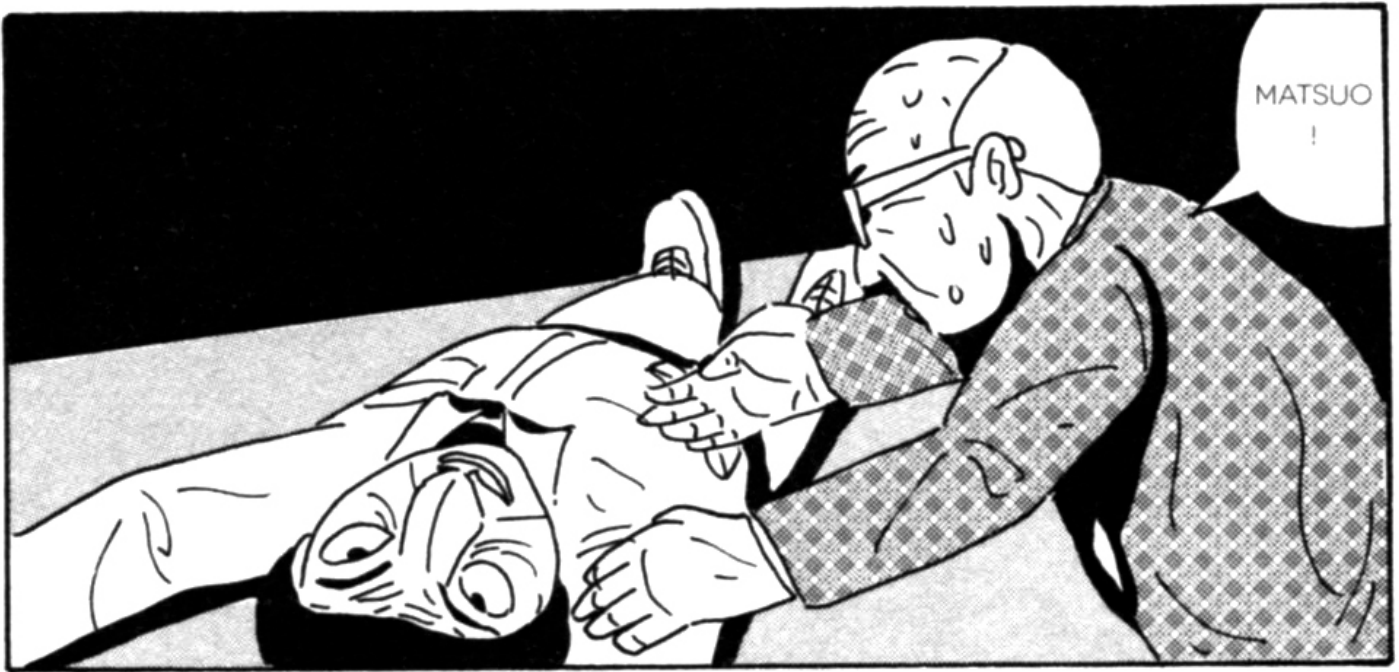




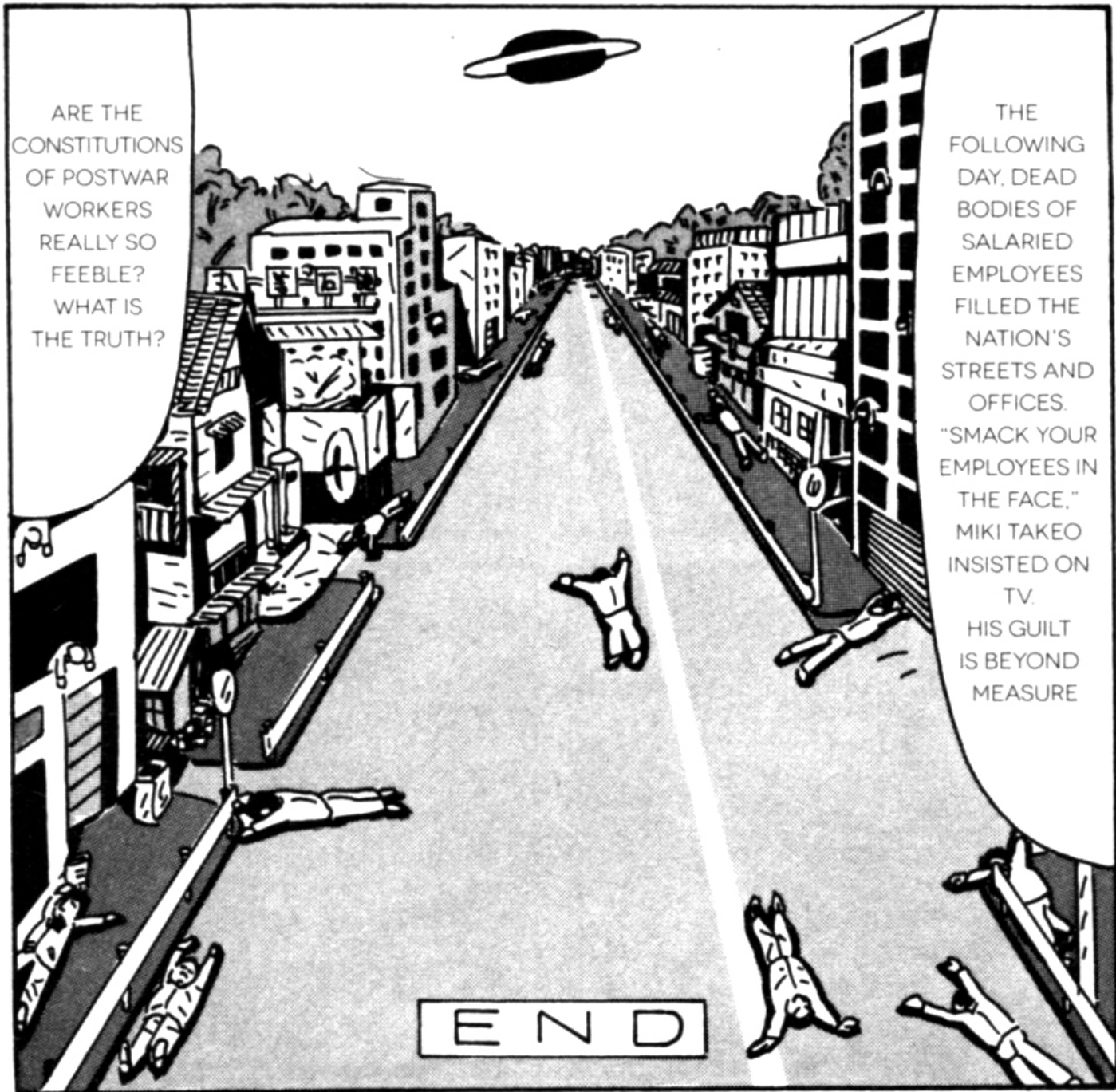








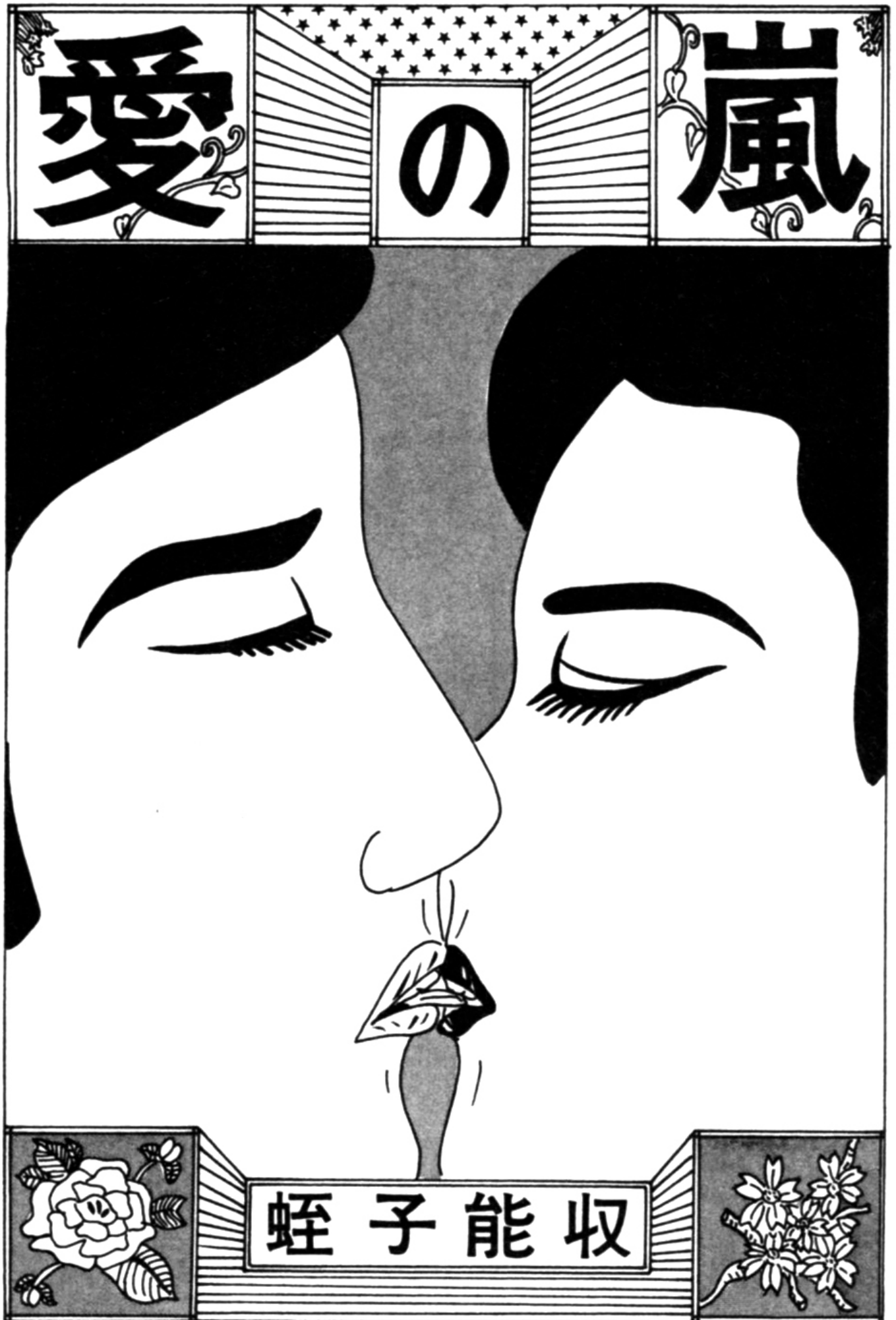
MATSUO  
!



ARE THE  
CONSTITUTIONS  
OF POSTWAR  
WORKERS  
REALLY SO  
FEEBLE?  
WHAT IS  
THE TRUTH?

THE  
FOLLOWING  
DAY, DEAD  
BODIES OF  
SALARIED  
EMPLOYEES  
FILLED THE  
NATION'S  
STREETS AND  
OFFICES.  
"SMACK YOUR  
EMPLOYEES IN  
THE FACE,"  
MIKI TAKEO  
INSISTED ON  
TV.  
HIS GUILT  
IS BEYOND  
MEASURE

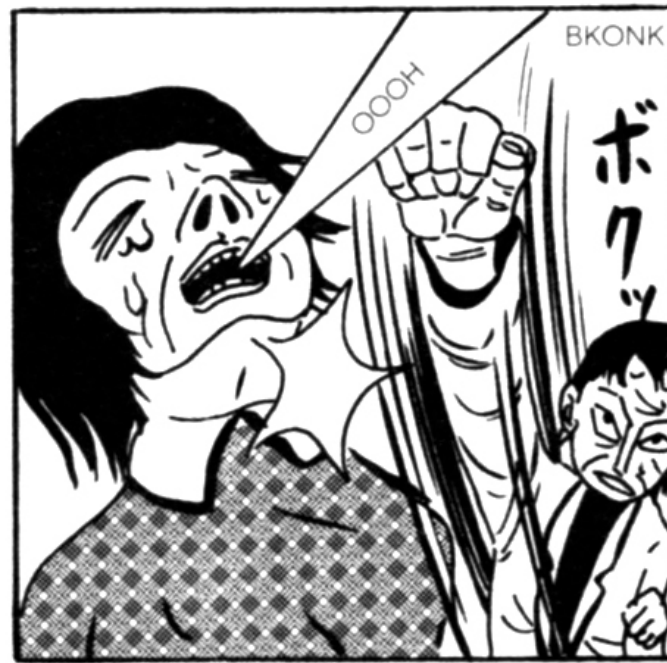
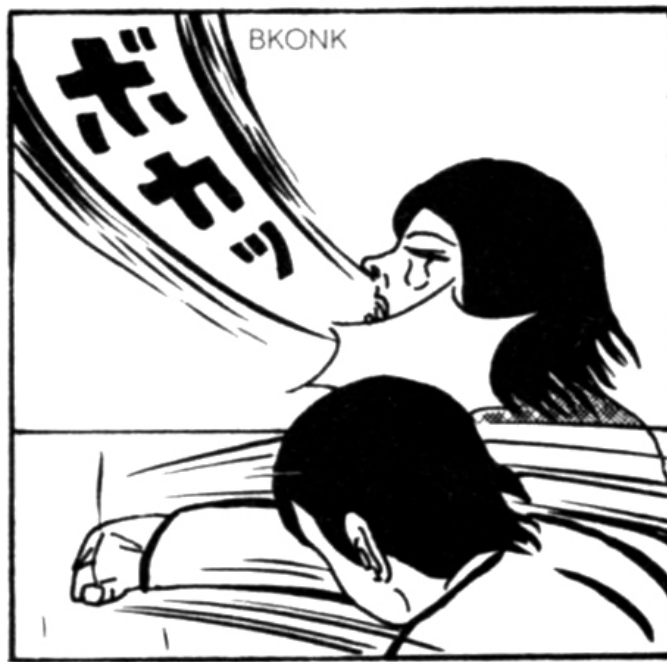
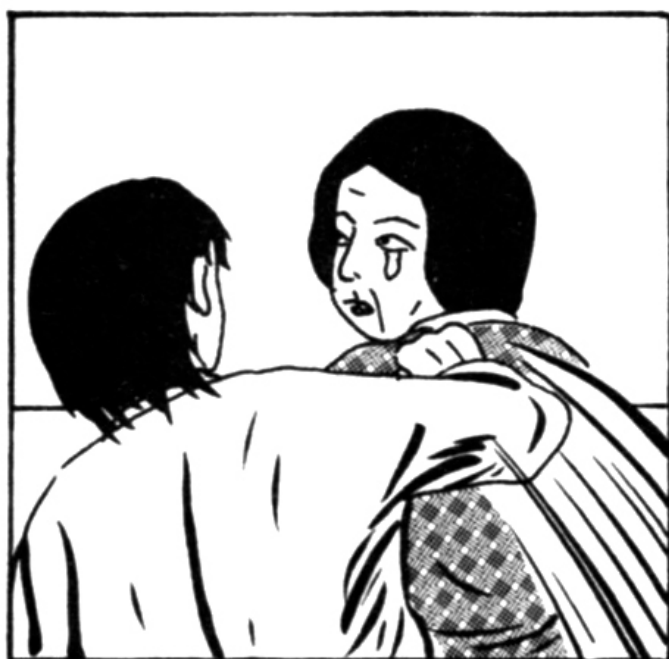
END





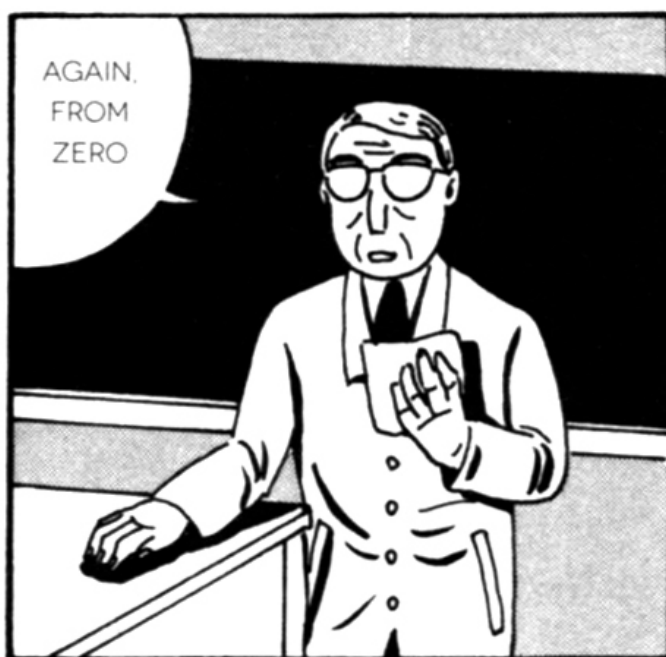
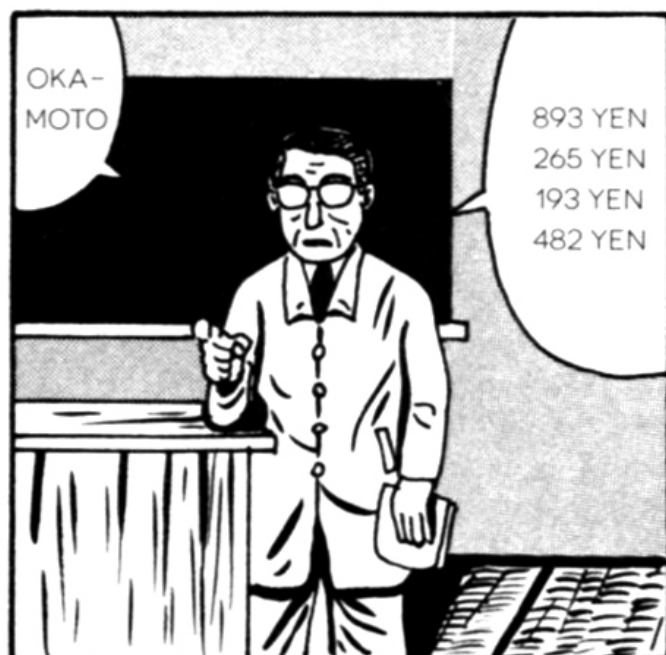


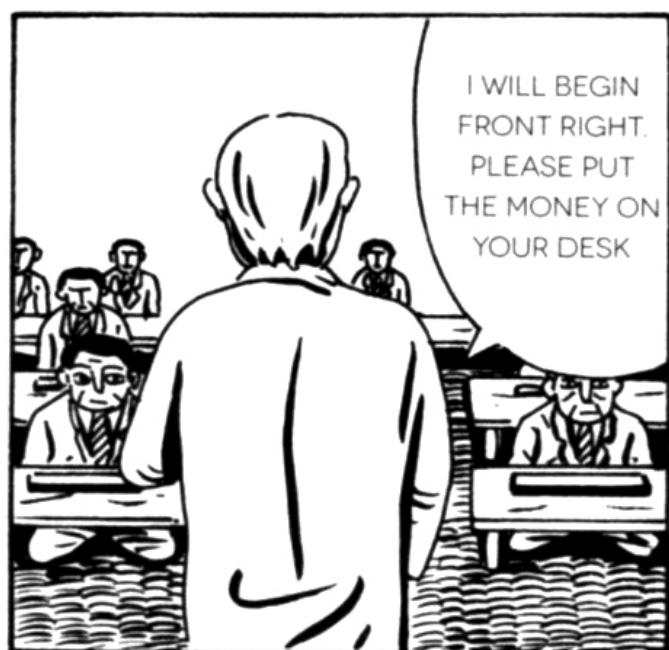


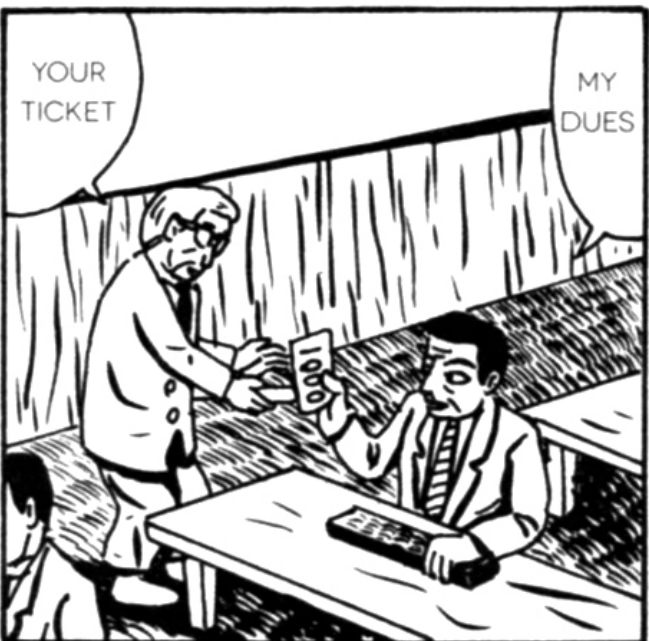
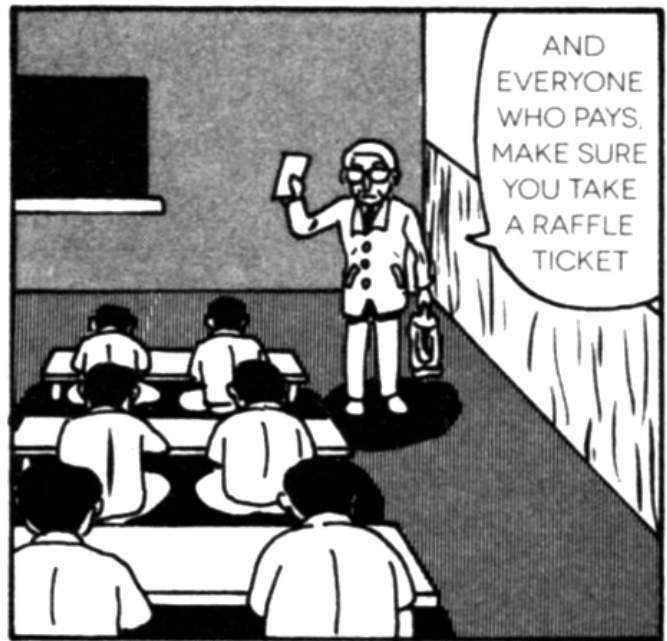
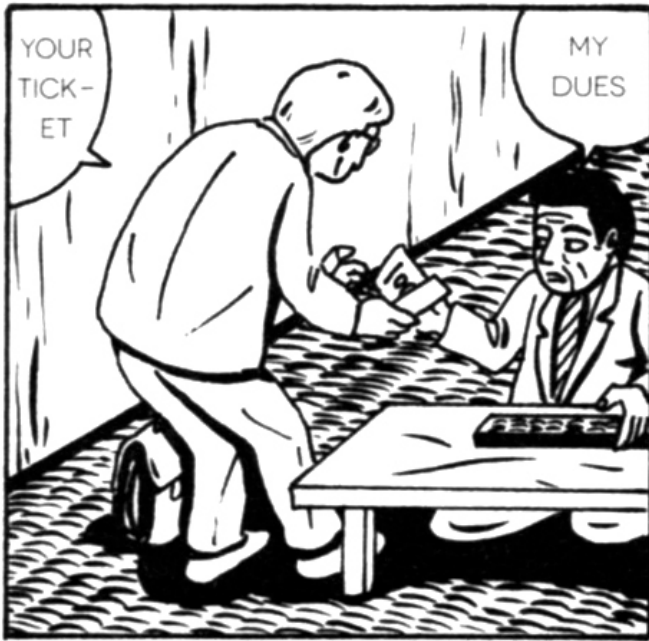


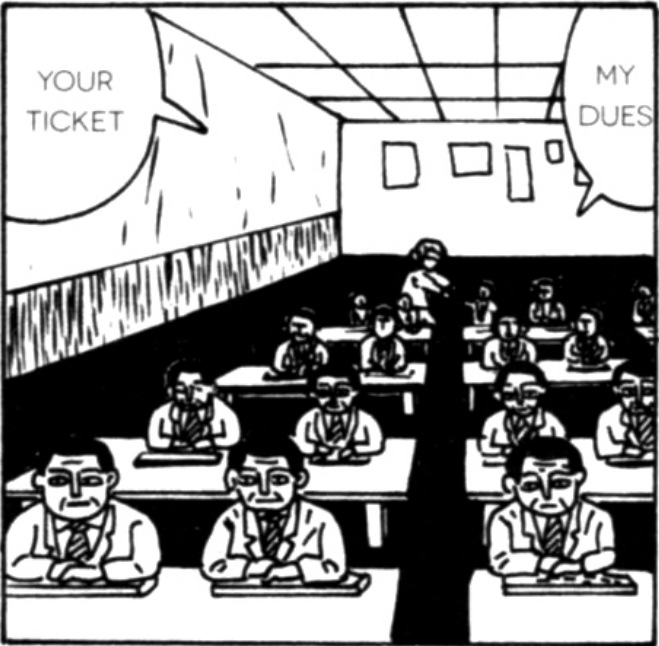
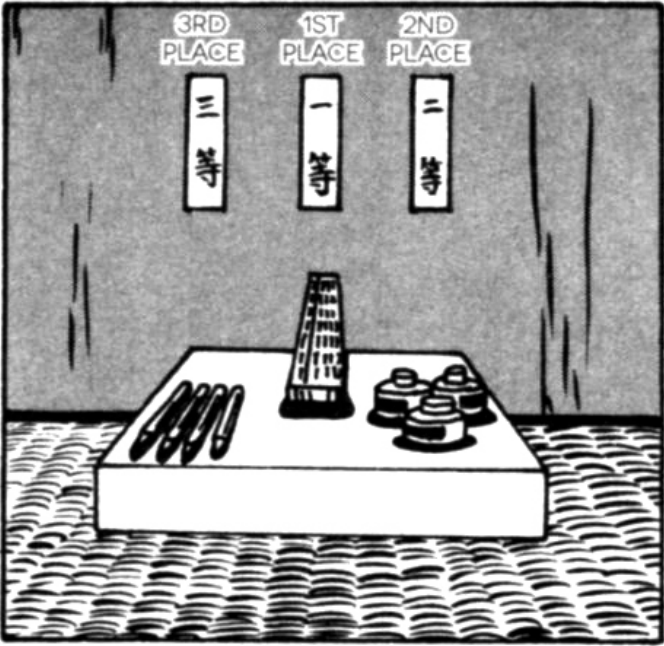




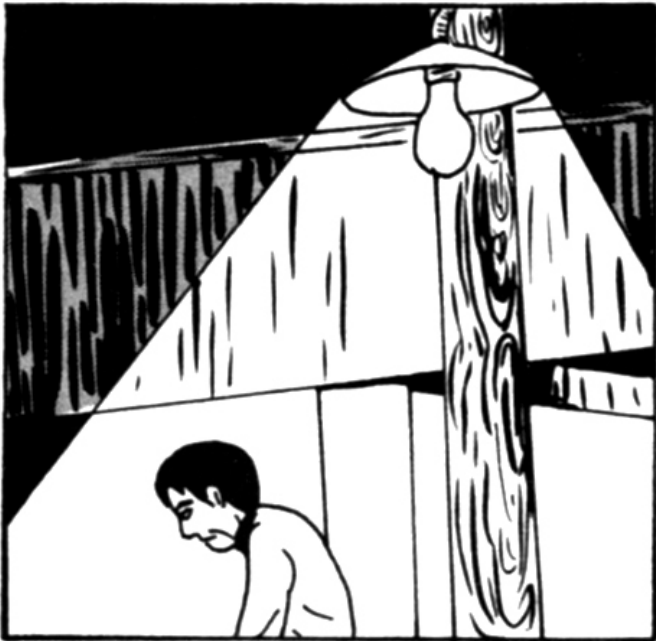


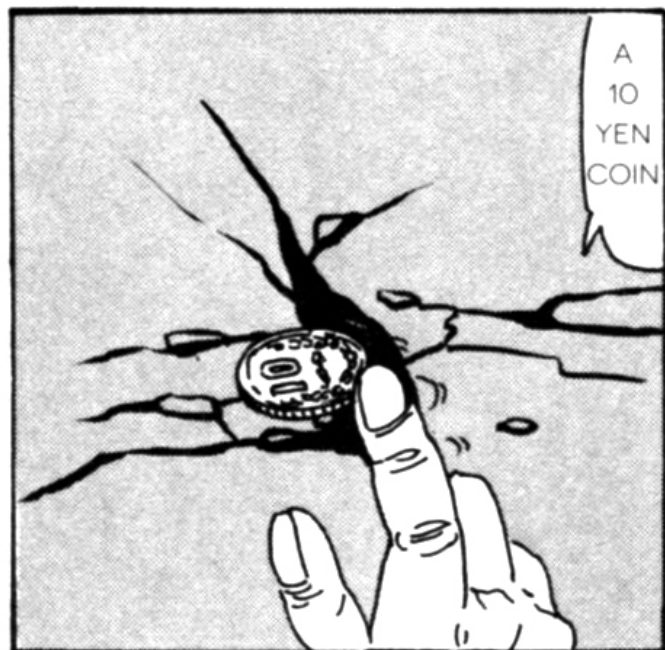
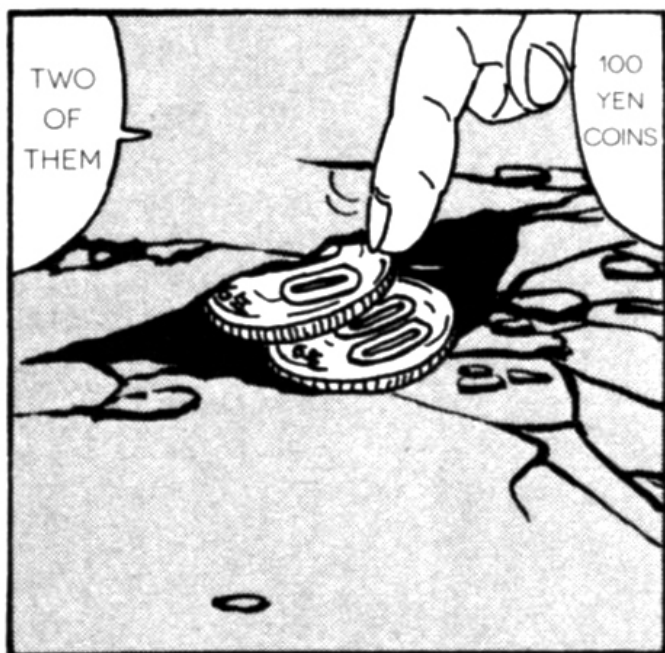


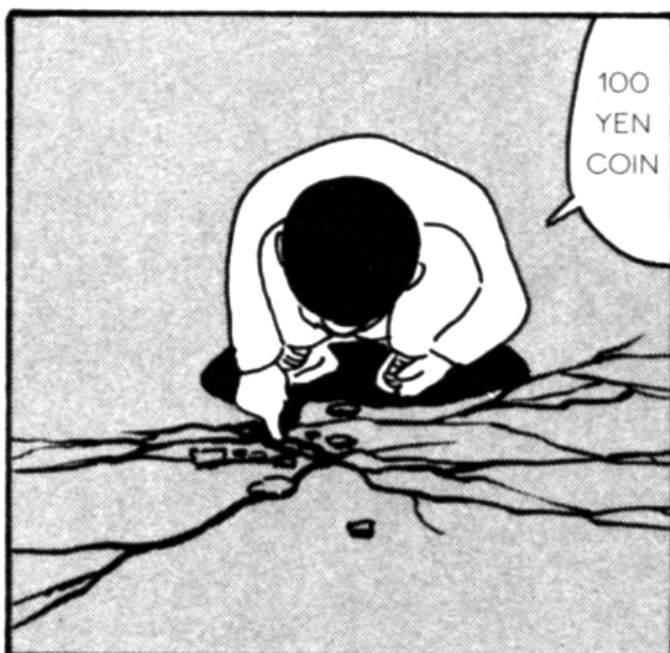
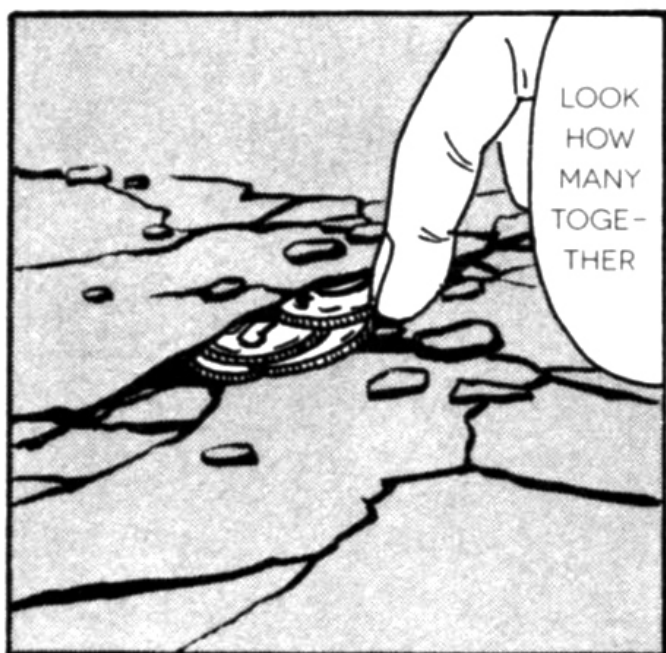






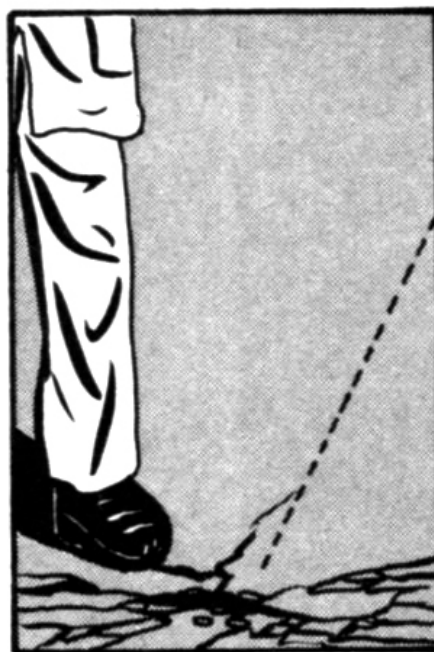




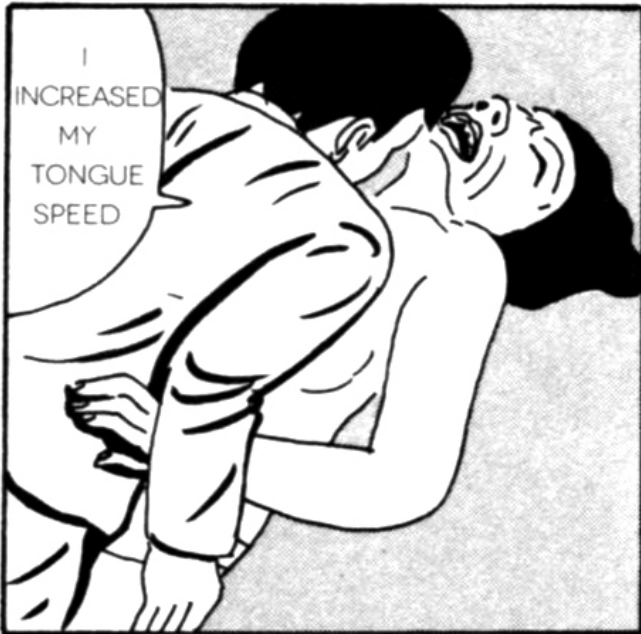
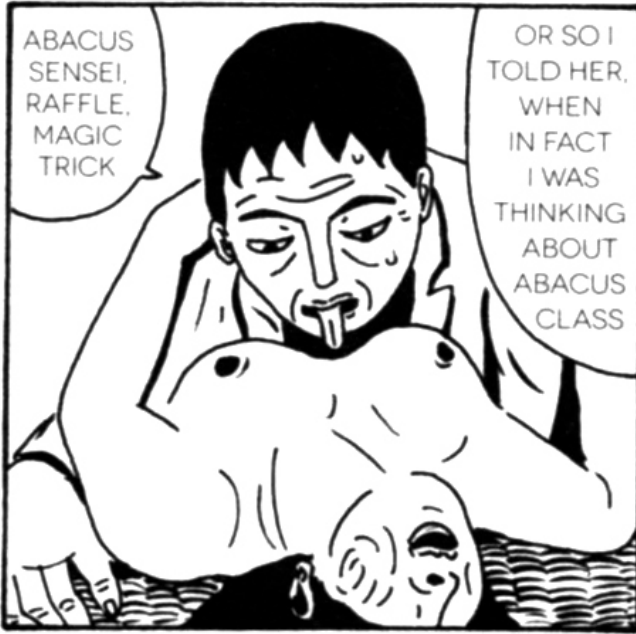


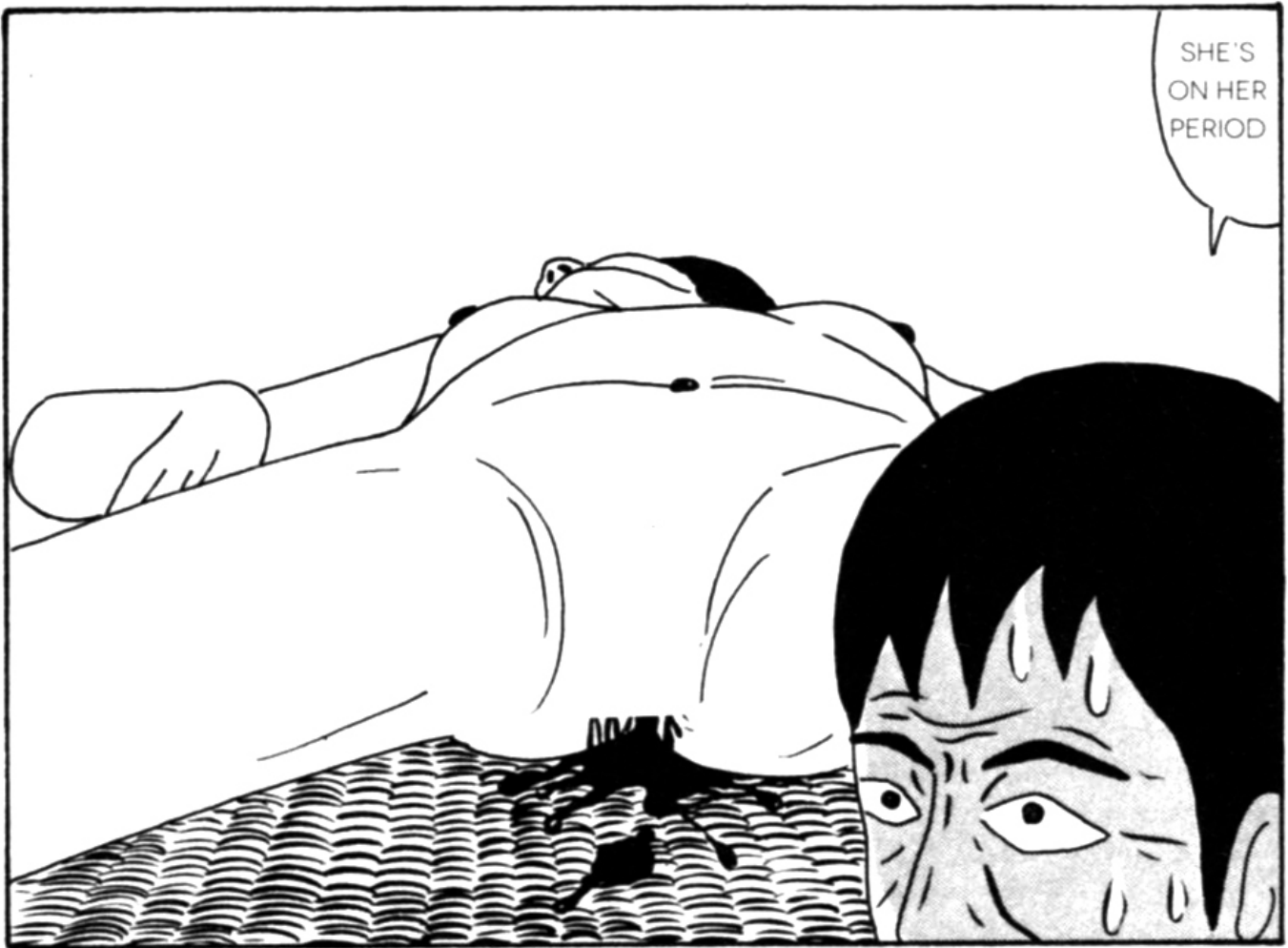




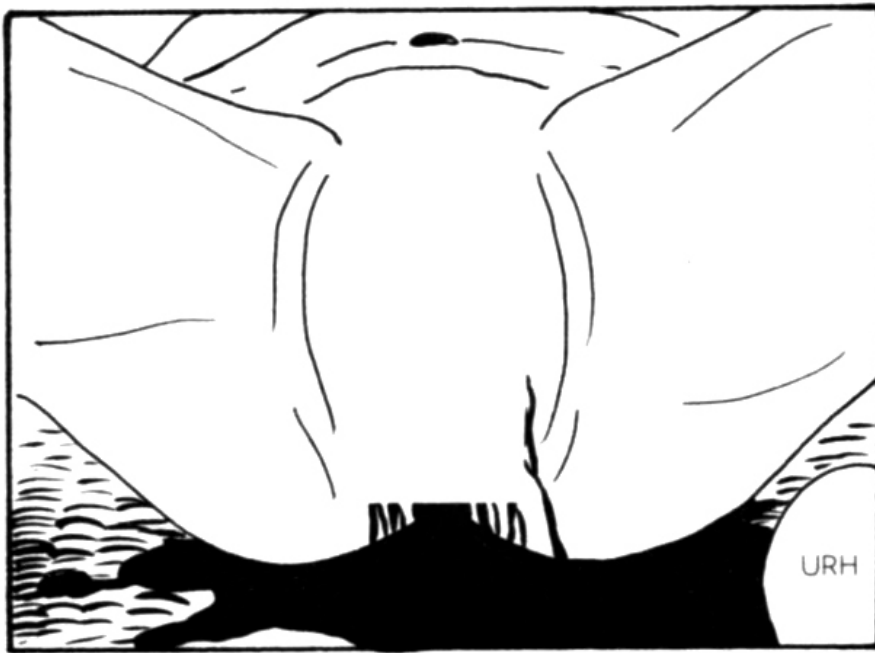






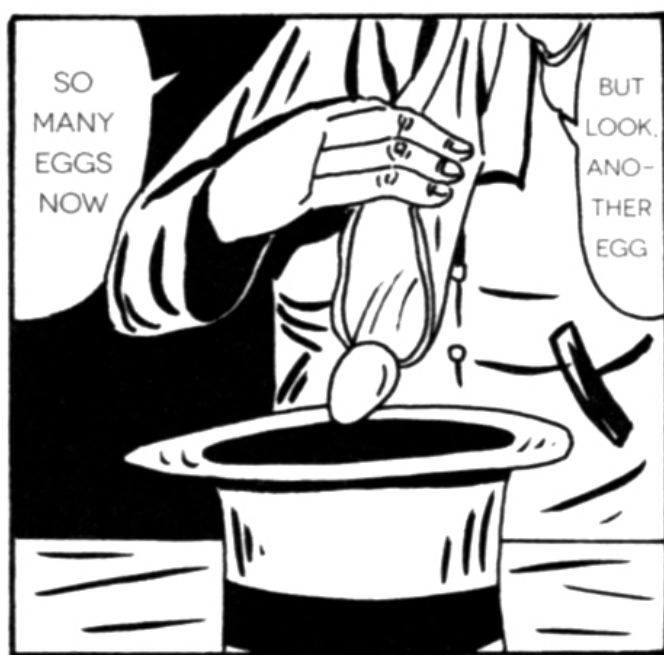
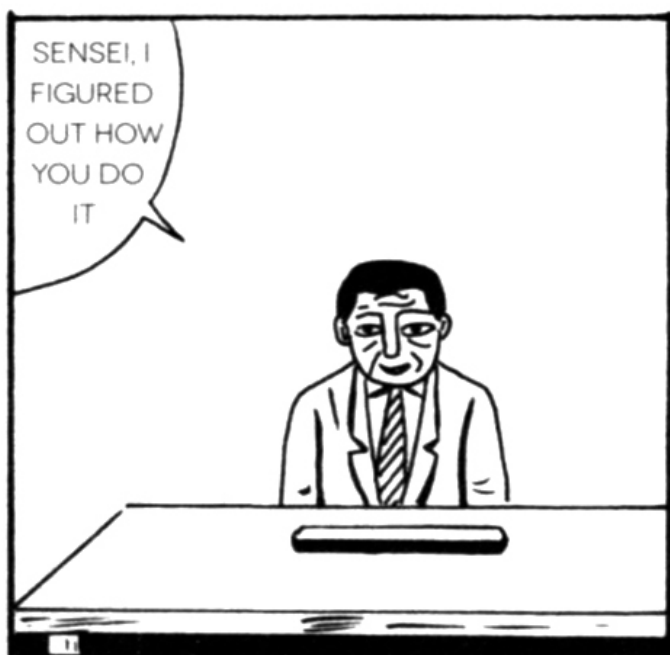




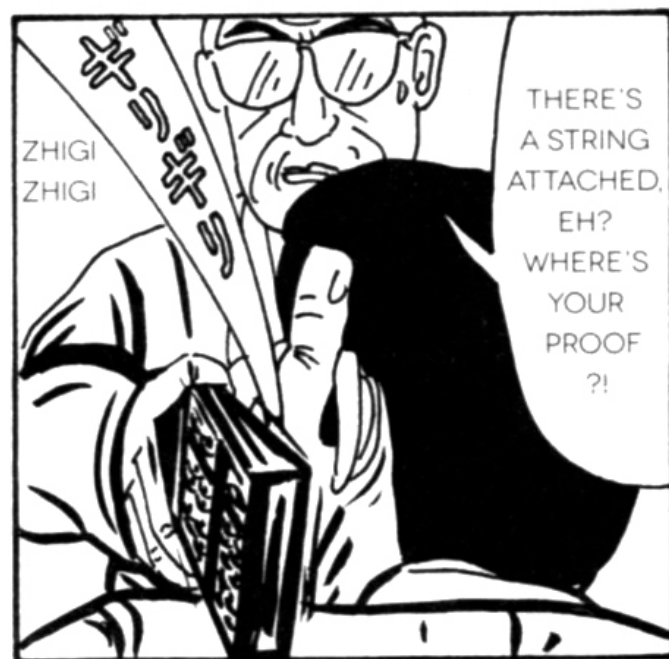


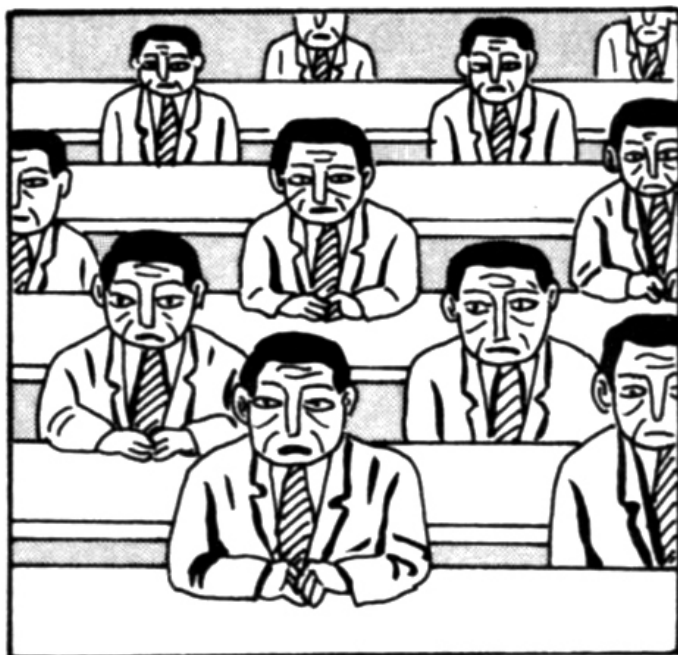


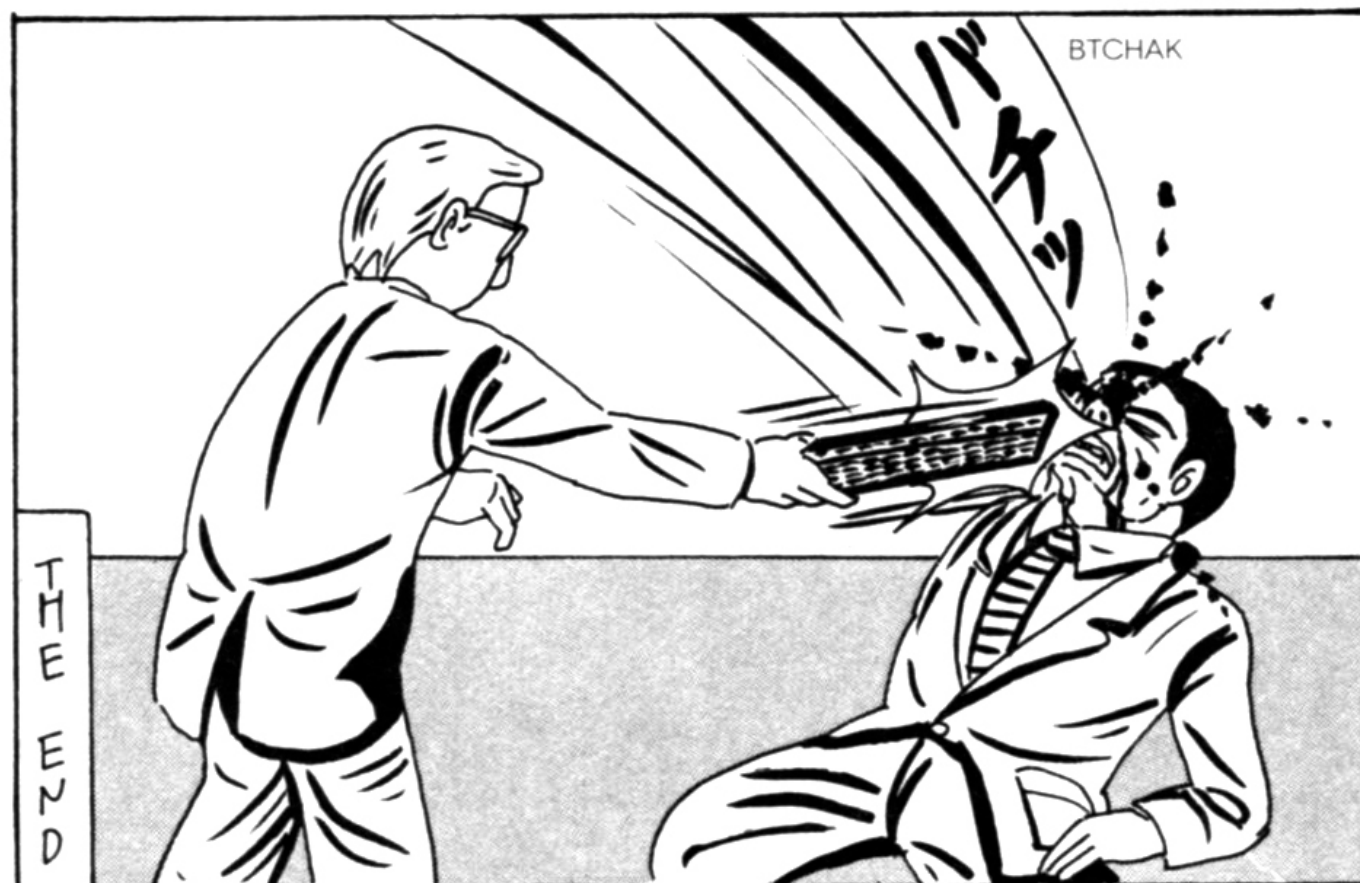










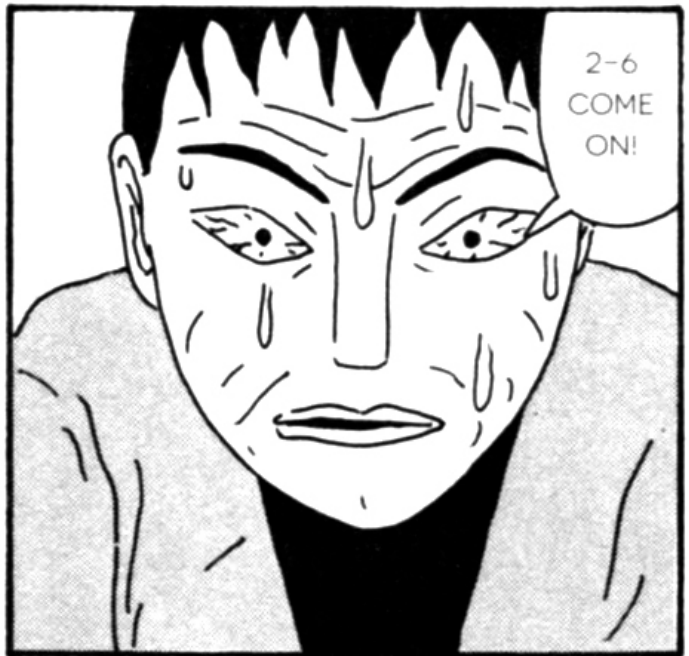


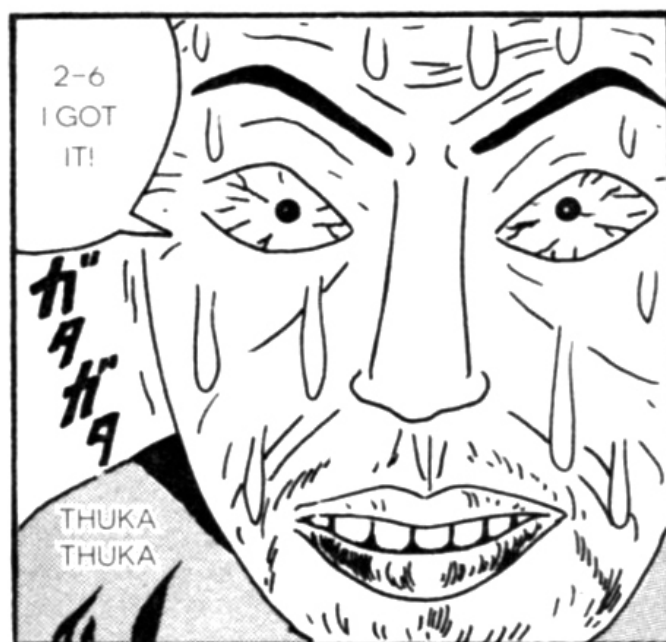
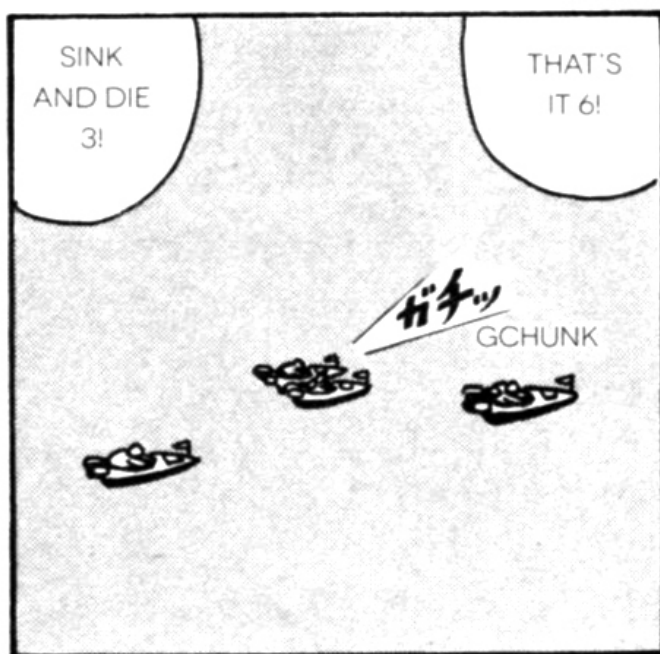
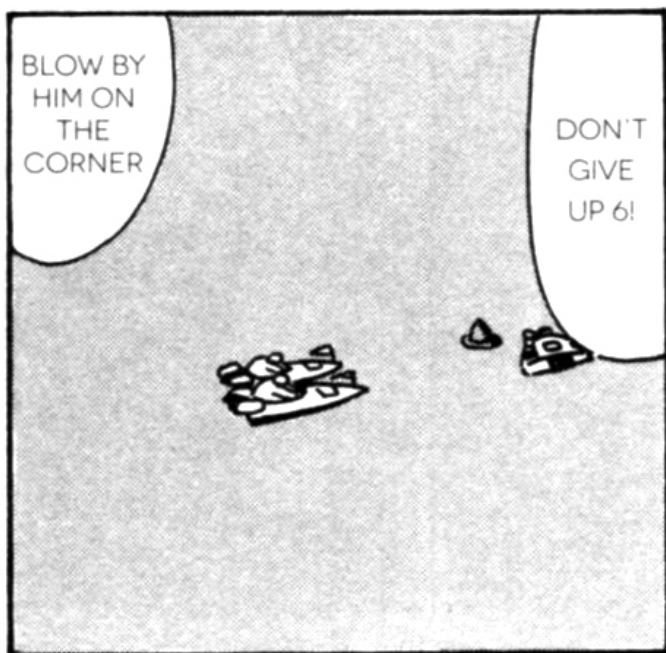
FINALLY PUBLISHED!! THE HORRIBLY INFAMOUS MOST RIDICULOUS WORK IN THE HISTORY OF MANGA!!



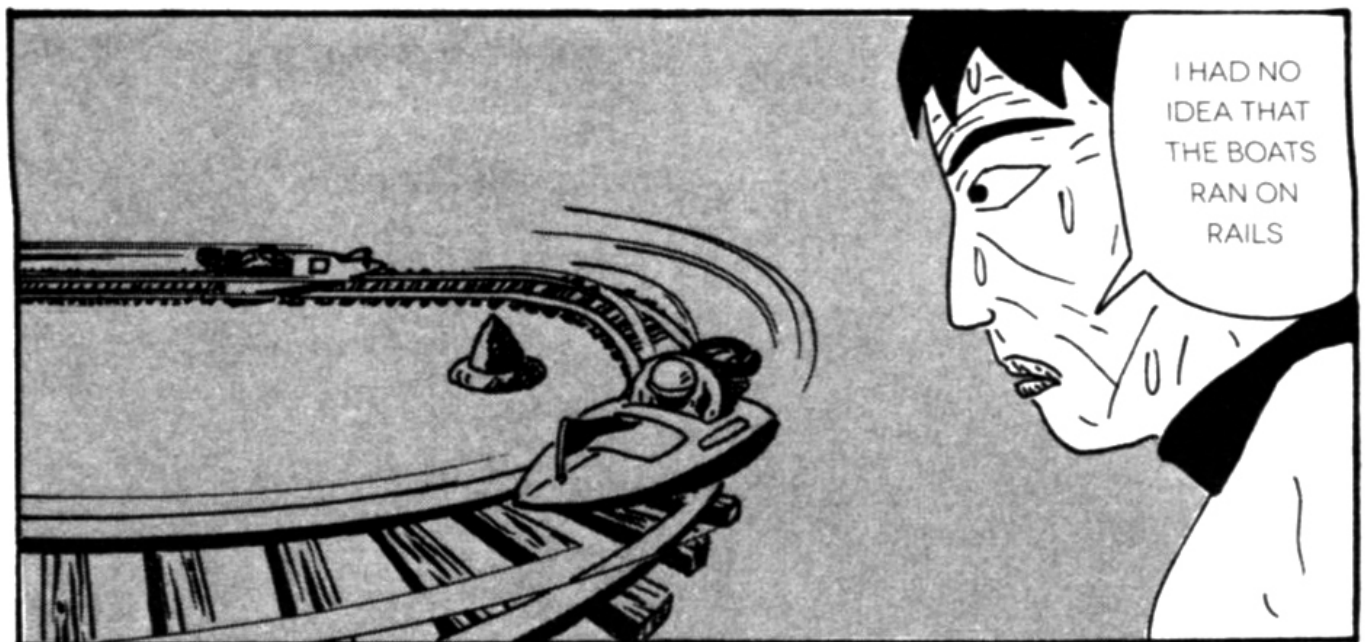
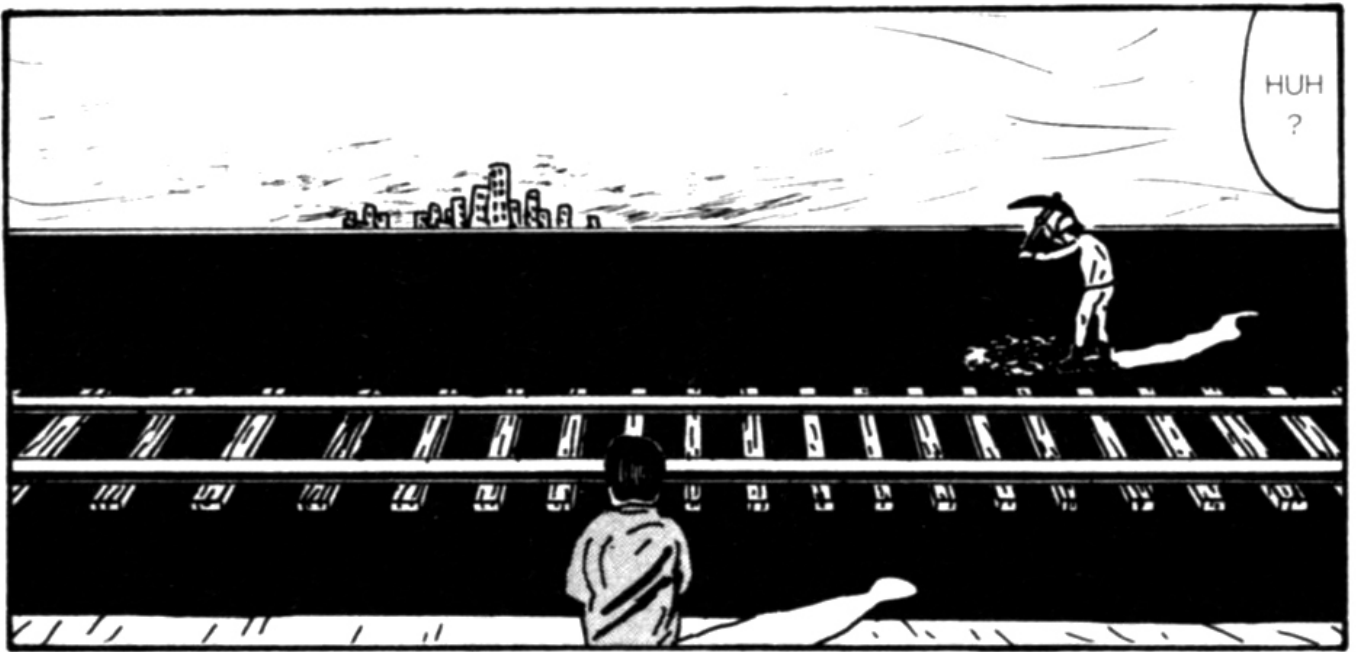
ESP  
EBISU YOSHIKAZU



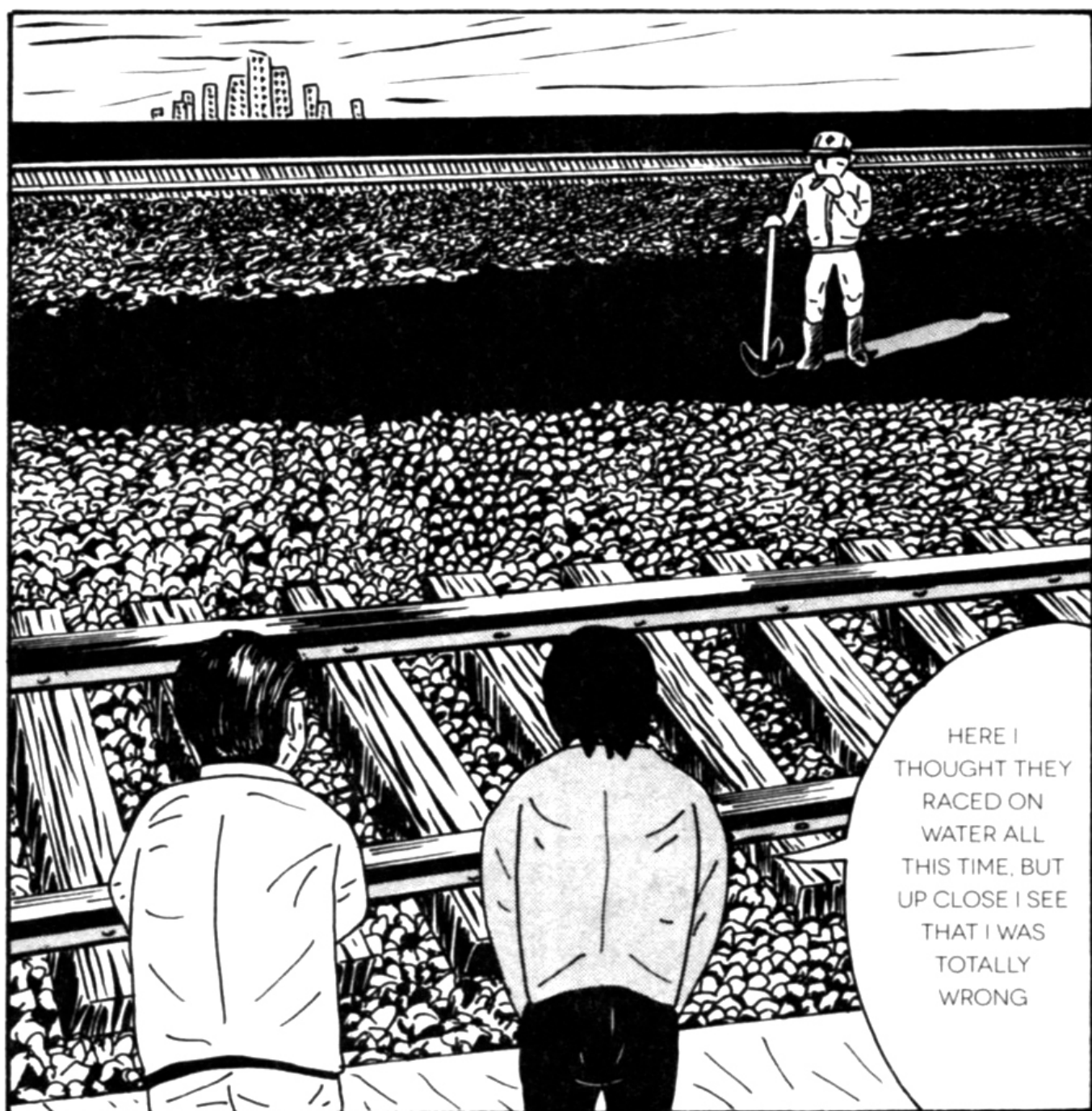




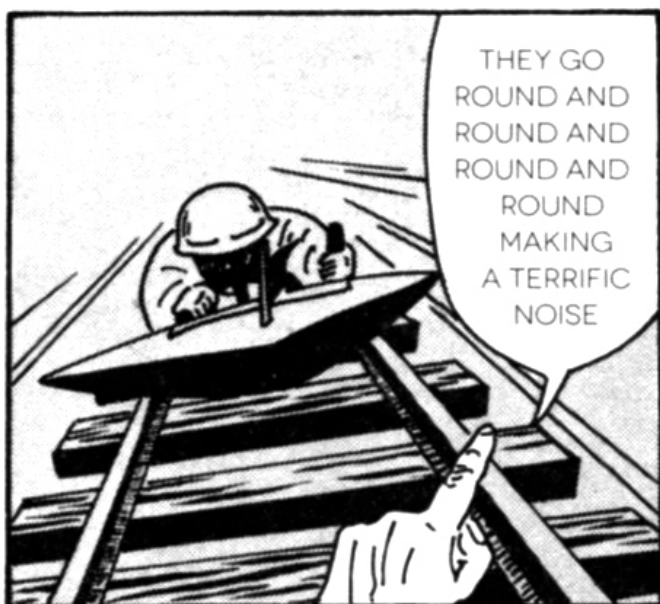








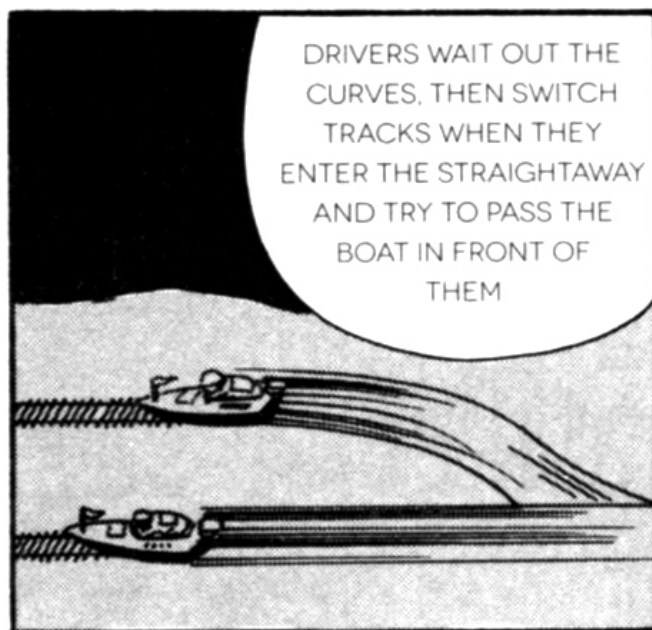
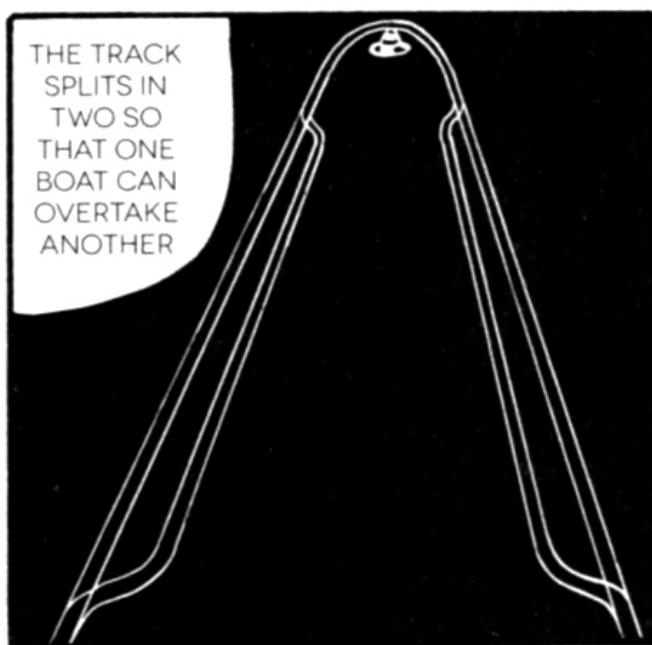
HERE I  
THOUGHT THEY  
RACED ON  
WATER ALL  
THIS TIME, BUT  
UP CLOSE I SEE  
THAT I WAS  
TOTALLY  
WRONG

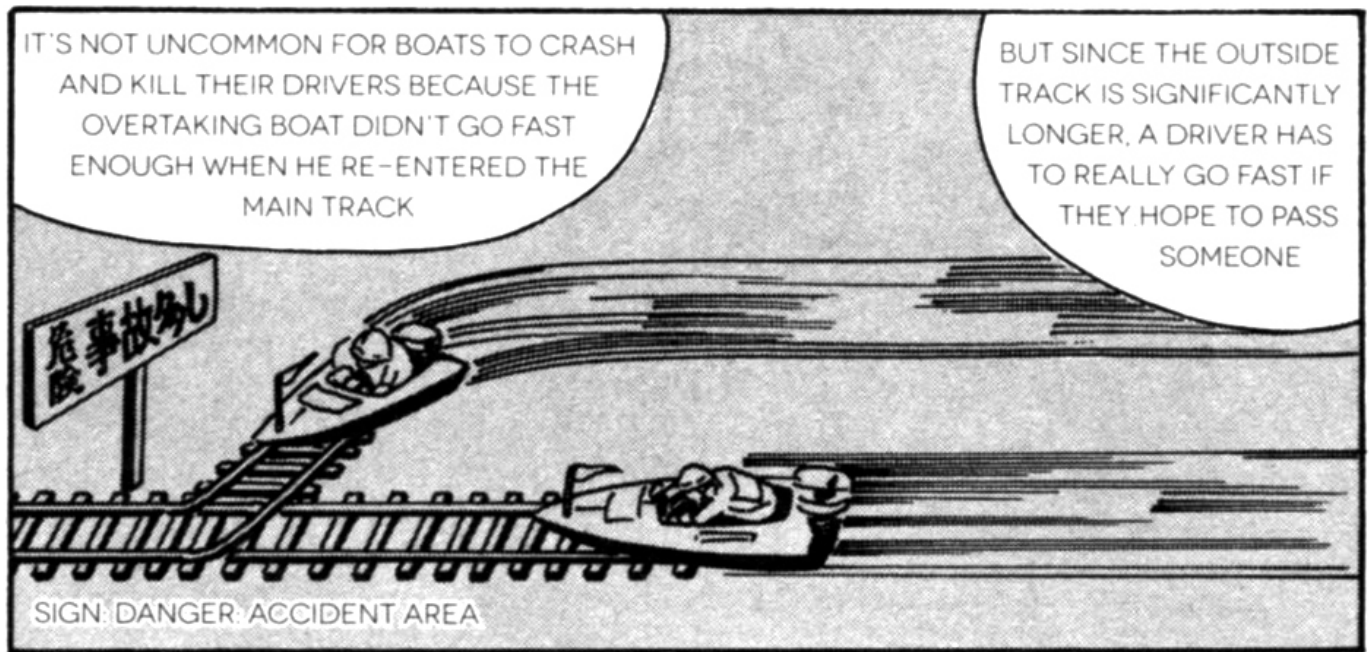


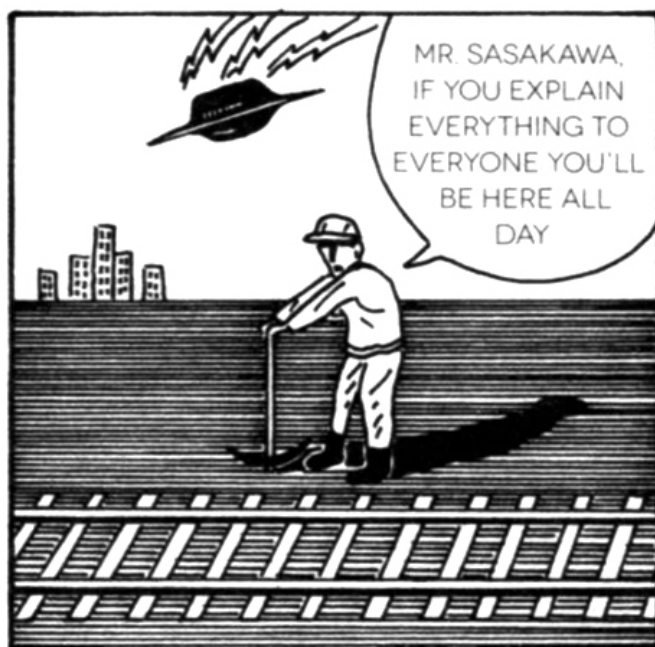
THEY GO  
ROUND AND  
ROUND AND  
ROUND AND  
ROUND  
MAKING  
A TERRIFIC  
NOISE



HA HA! THAT'S  
RIGHT. BOAT  
RACING ALL  
HAPPENS ON  
TRACKS LIKE  
THESE

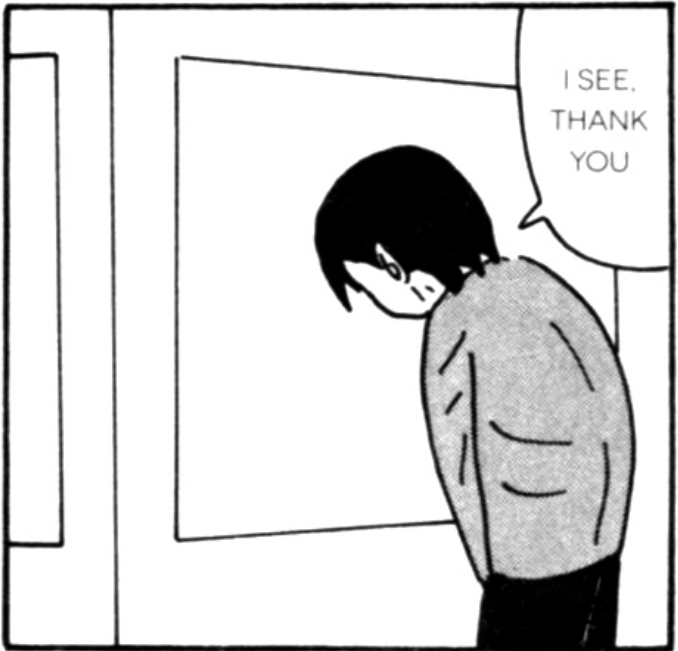
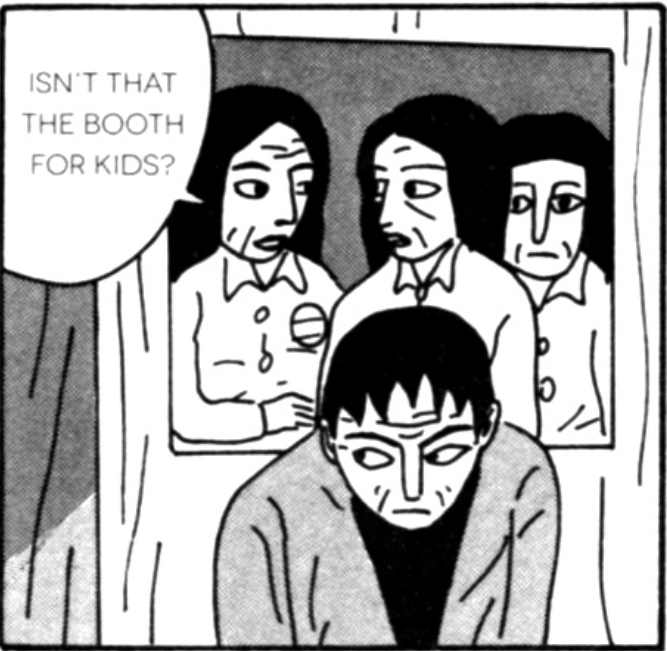
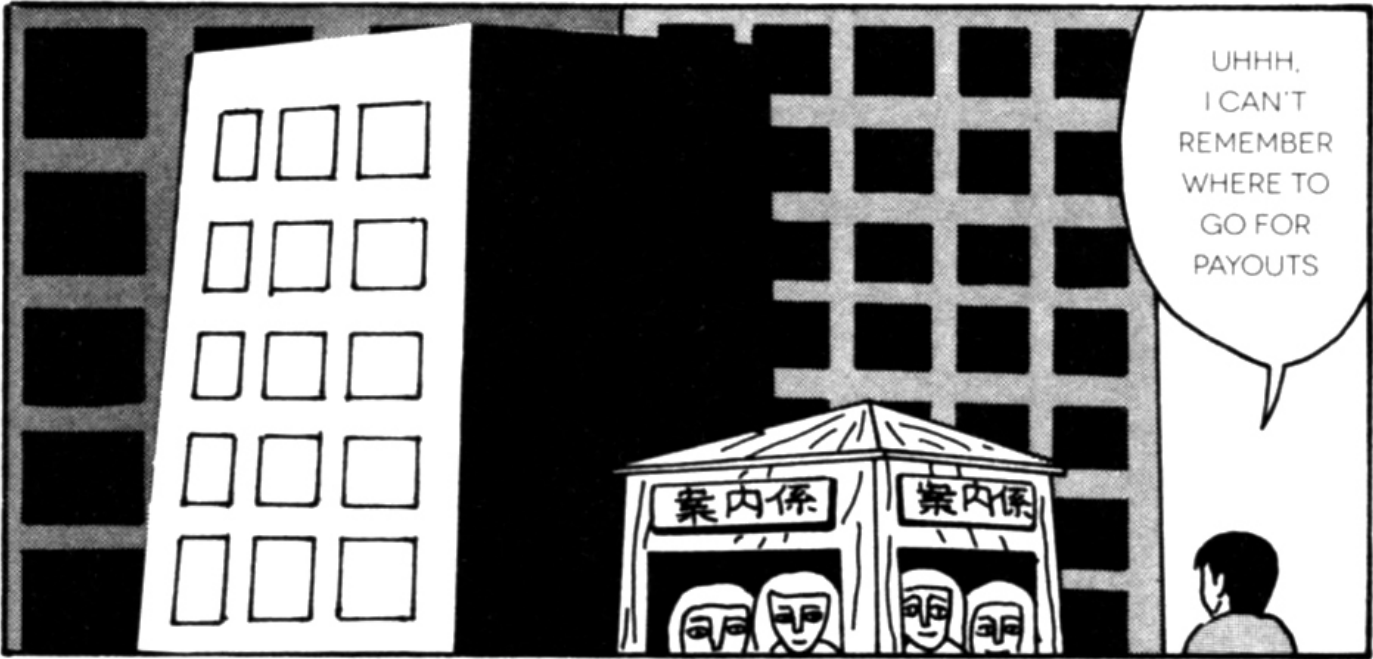


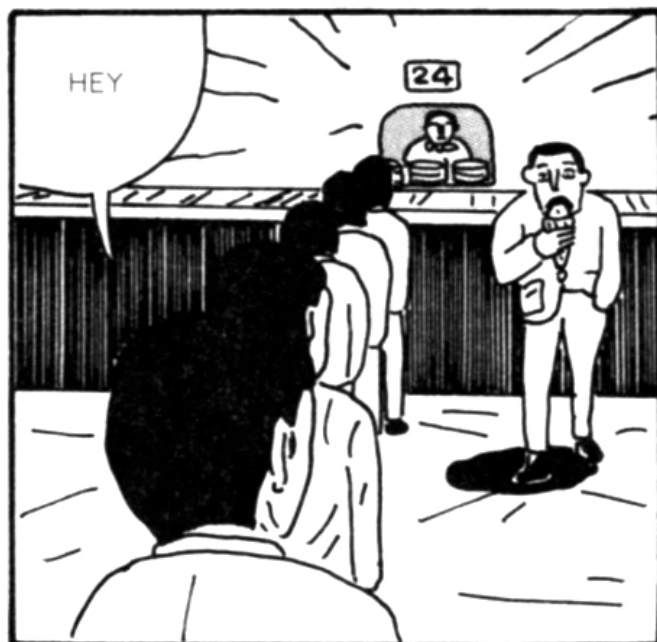




\*SASAKAWA RYOICHI  
FOUNDER OF BOAT RACES IN JAPAN



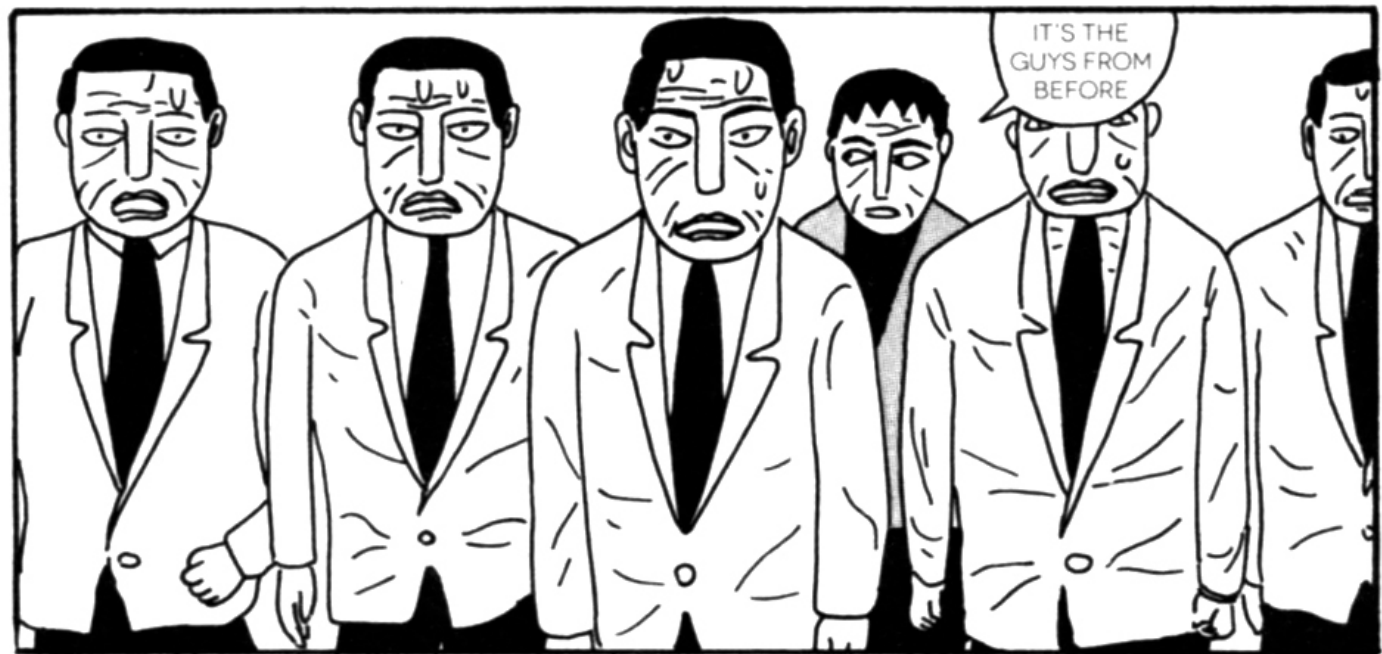
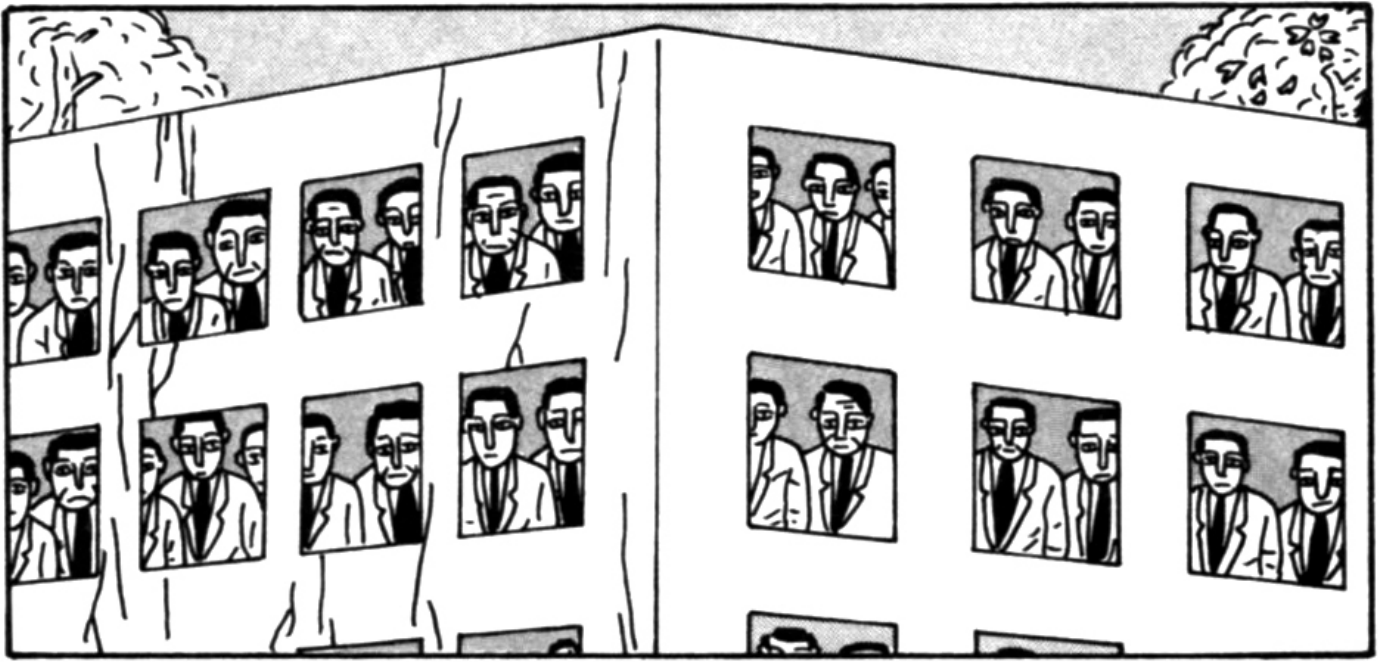




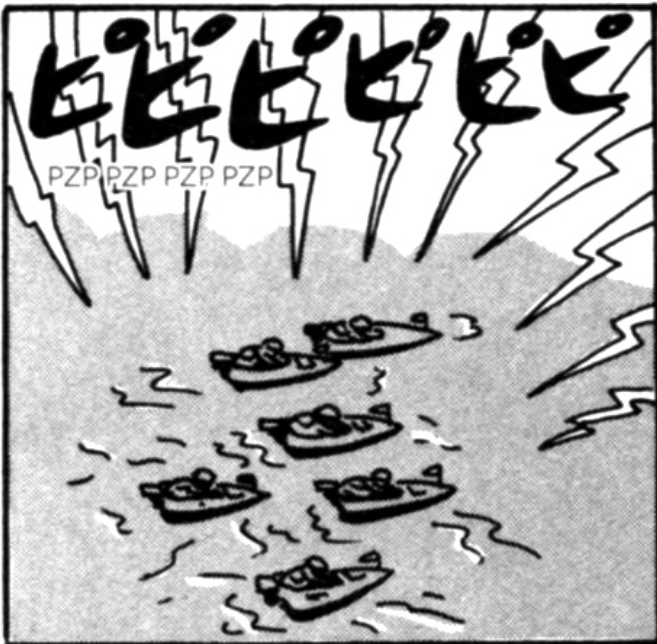




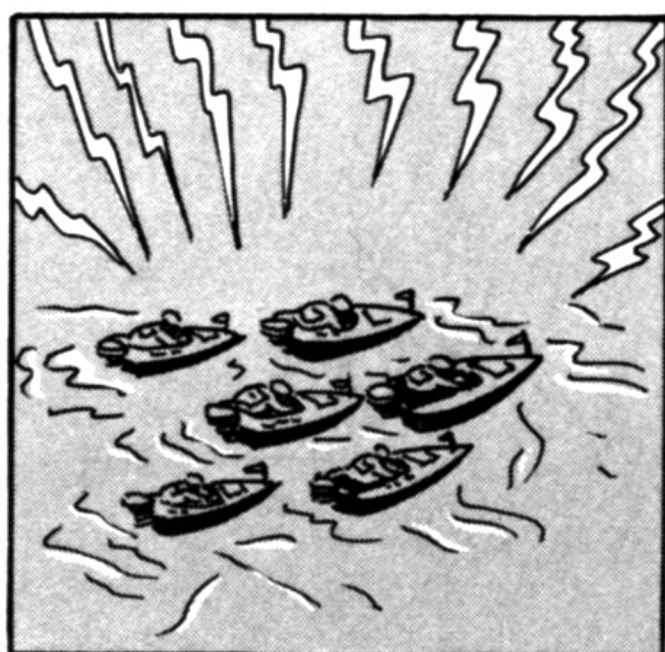
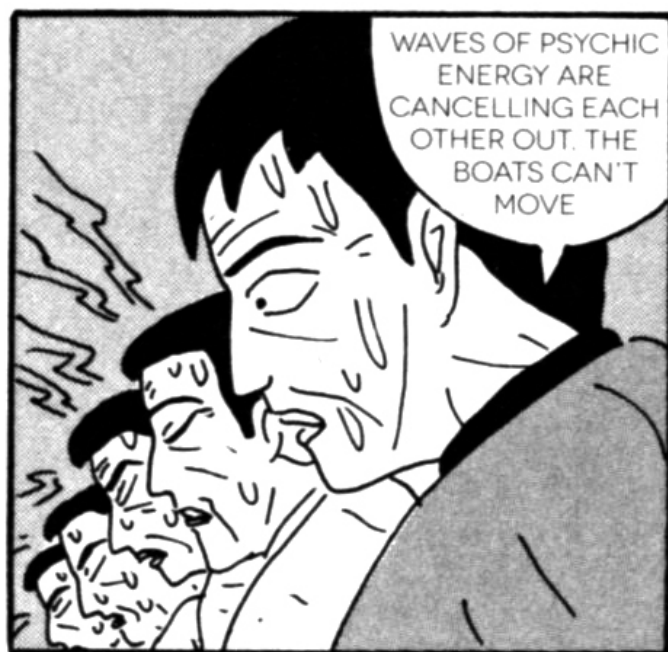
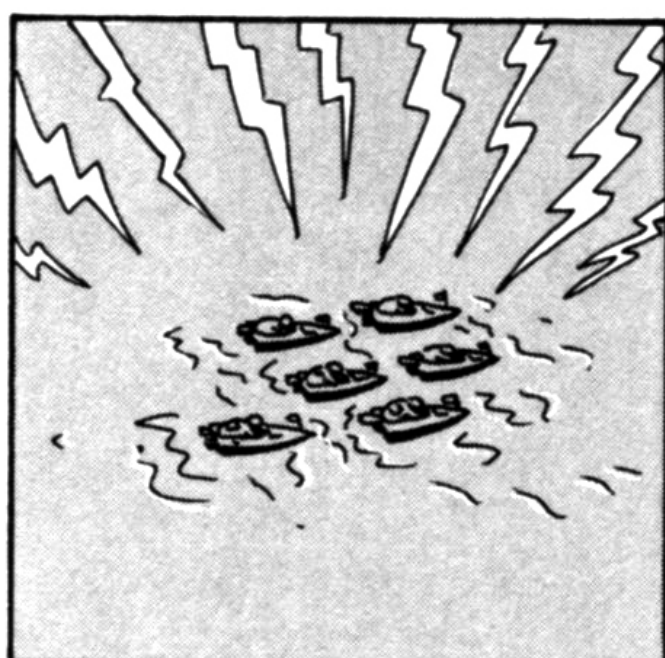




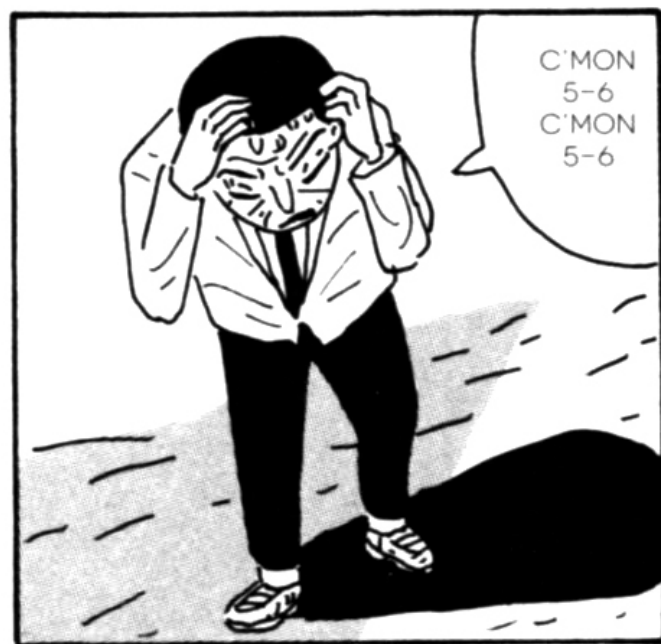
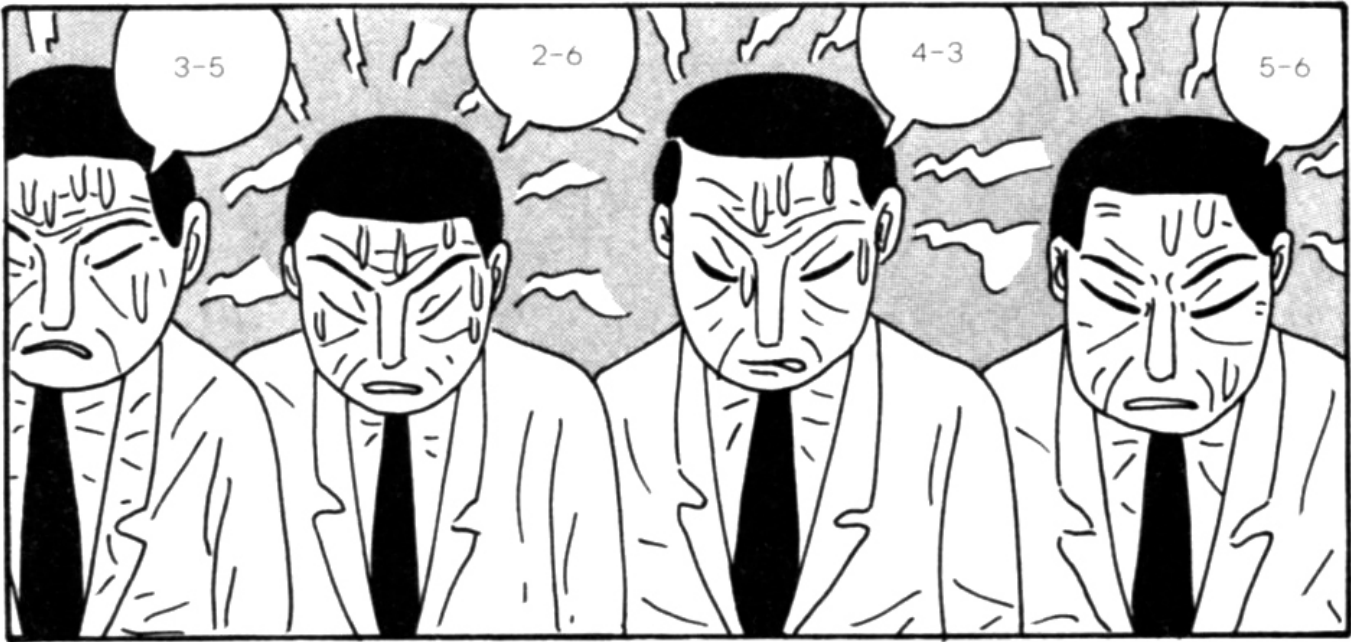


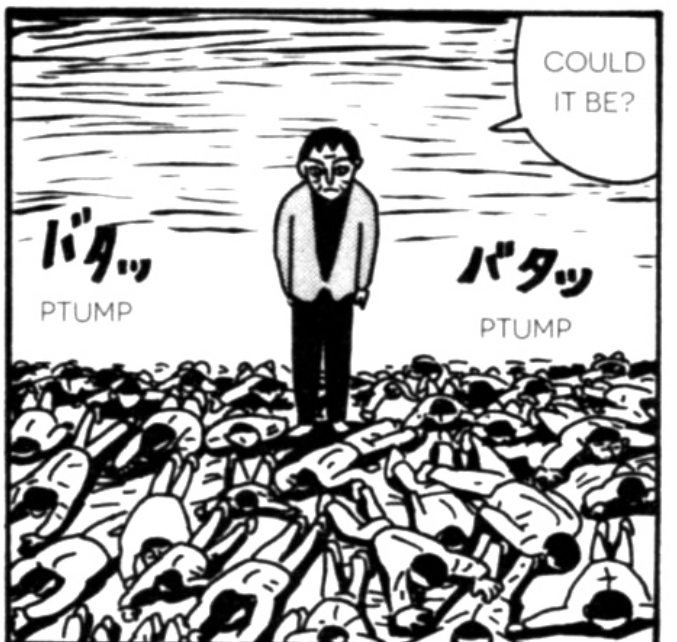
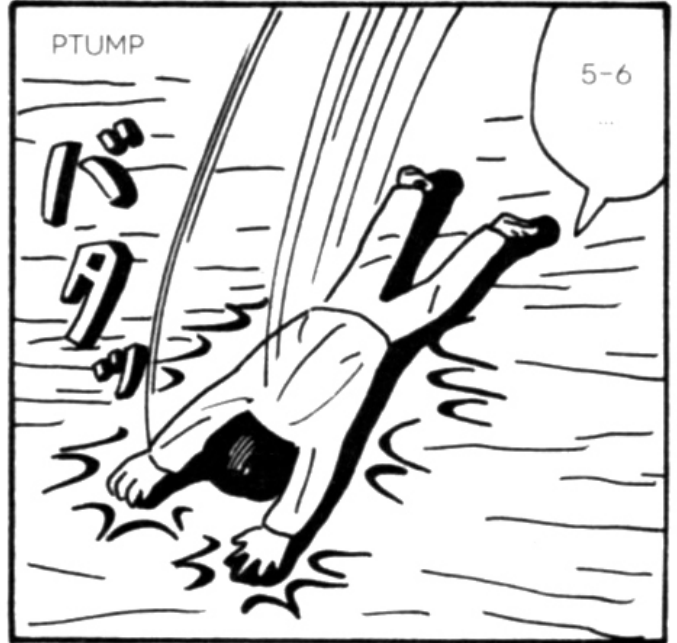






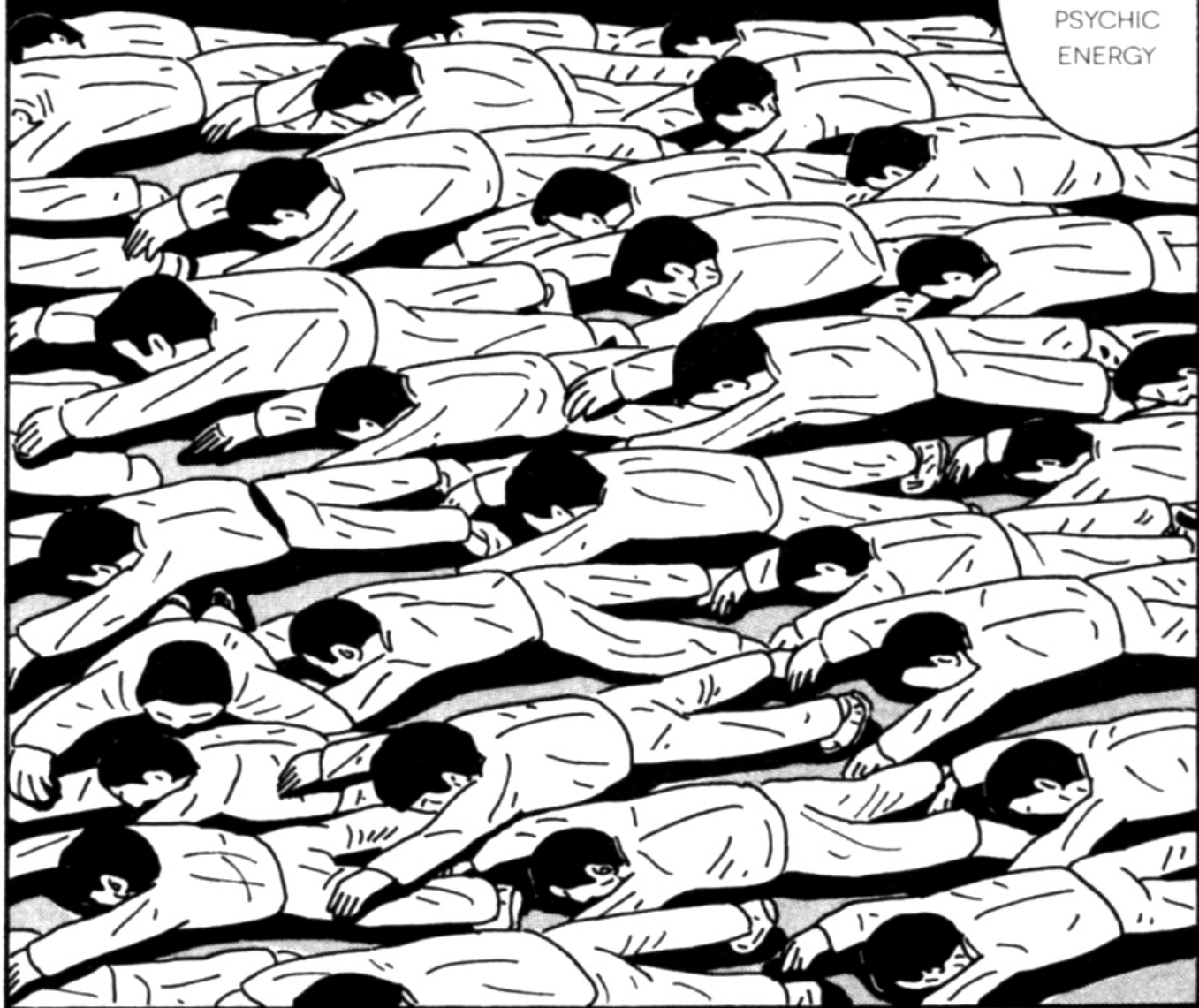






# ルイ ルイ

A TOTAL  
BURNOUT  
FROM USING  
TOO MUCH  
PSYCHIC  
ENERGY



END

LATE NIGHT PARTY

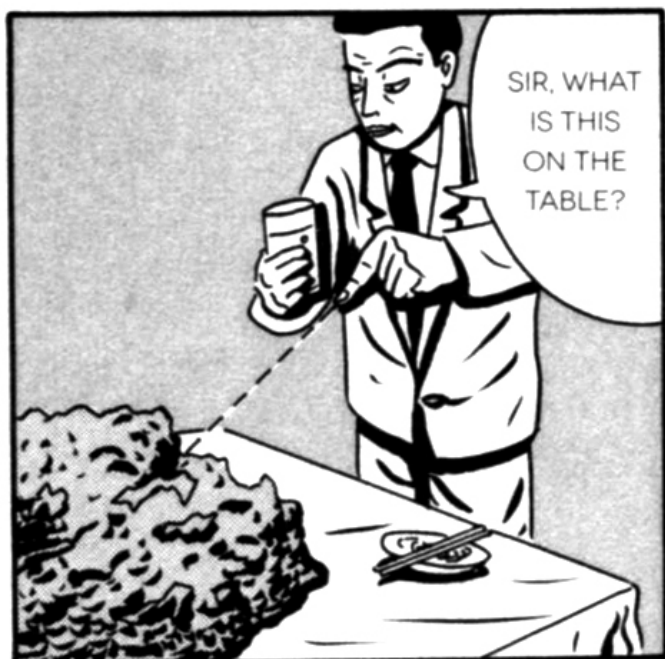
# 真夜中のパーティ







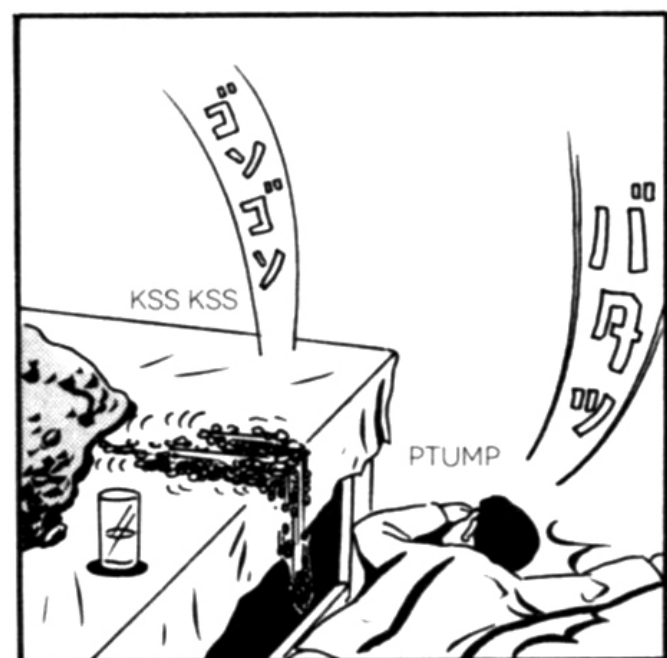


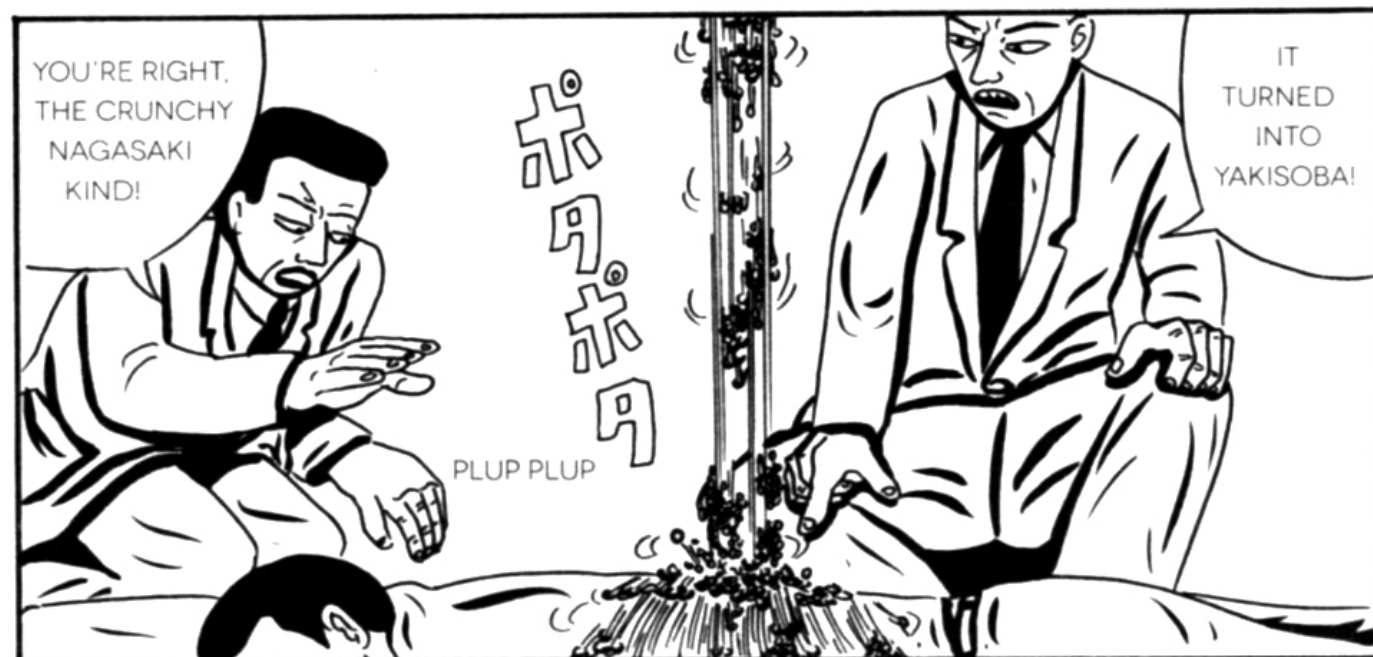
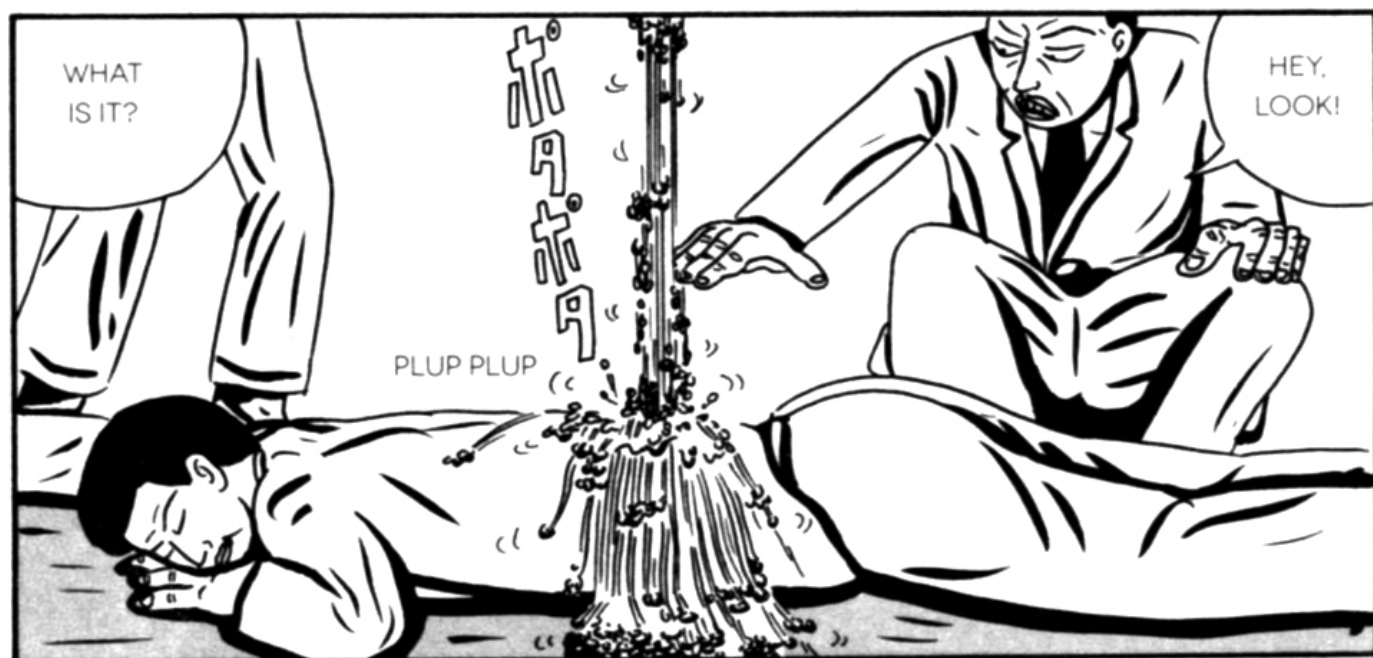
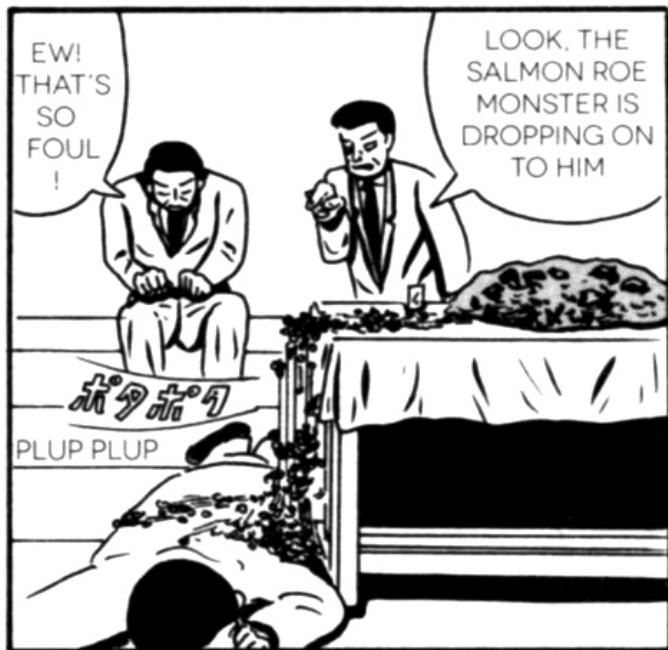














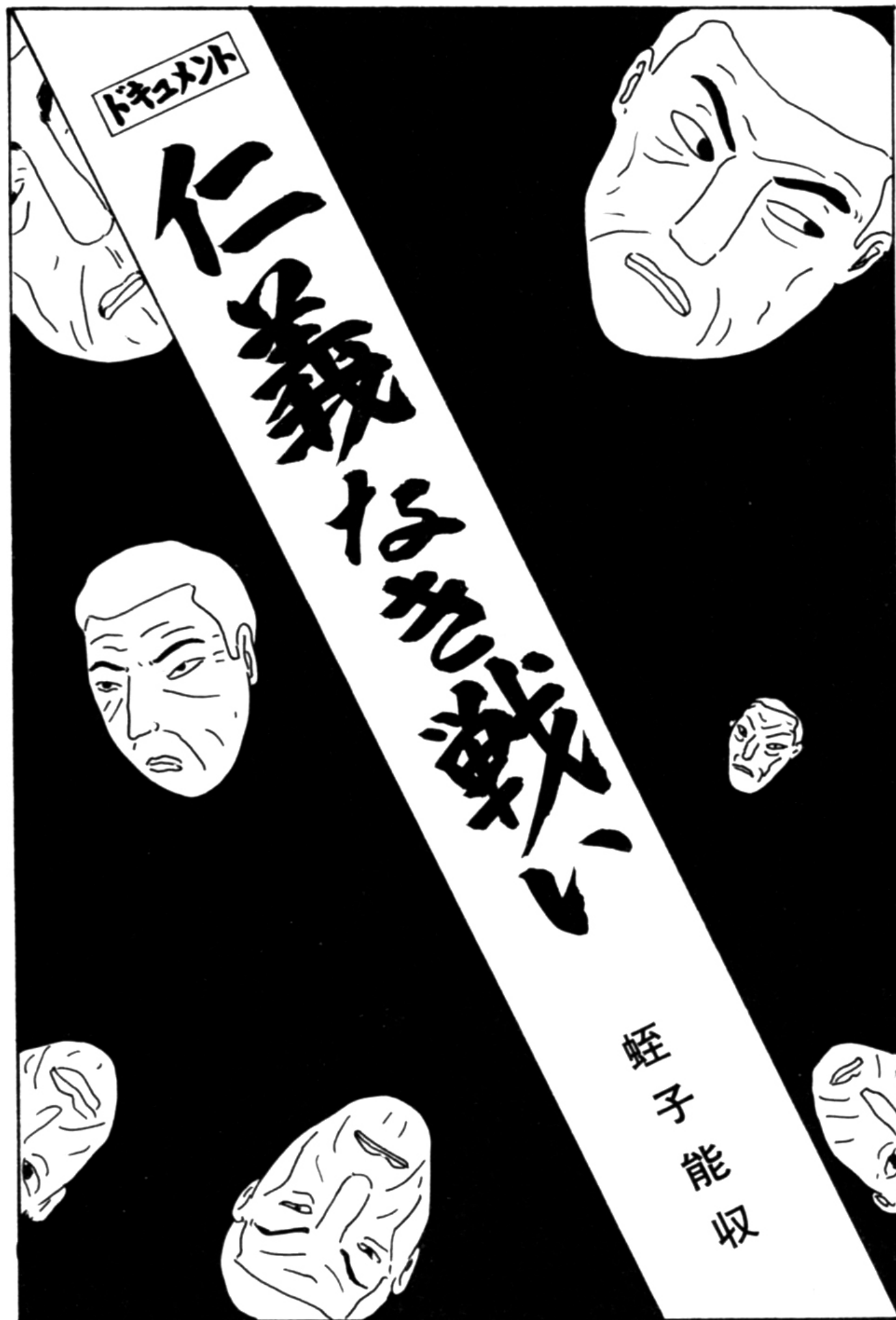


BSUP

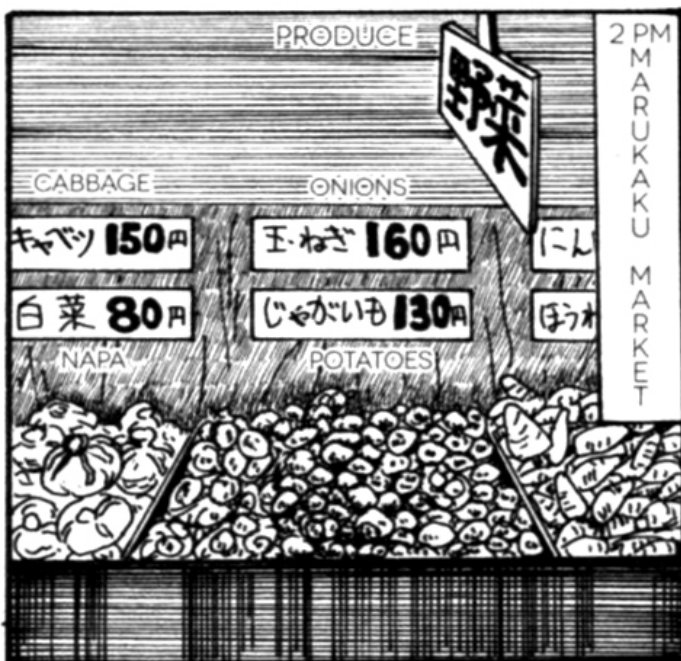
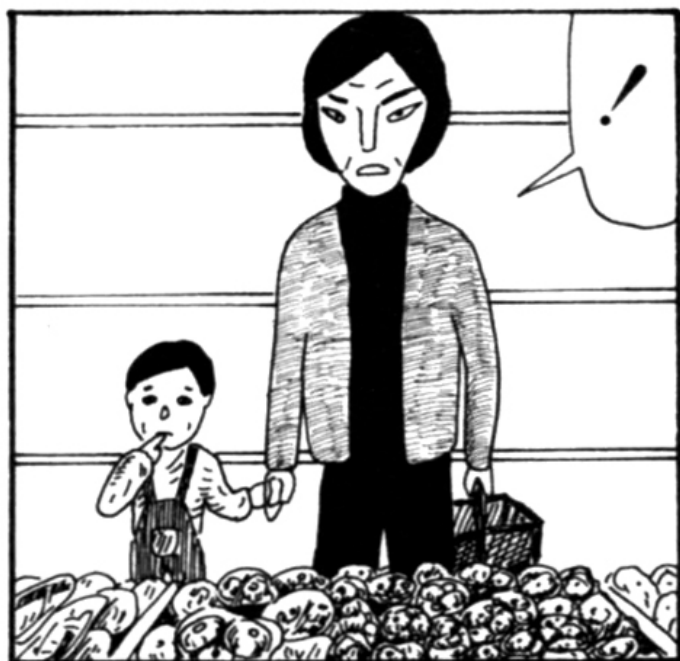
BSUP

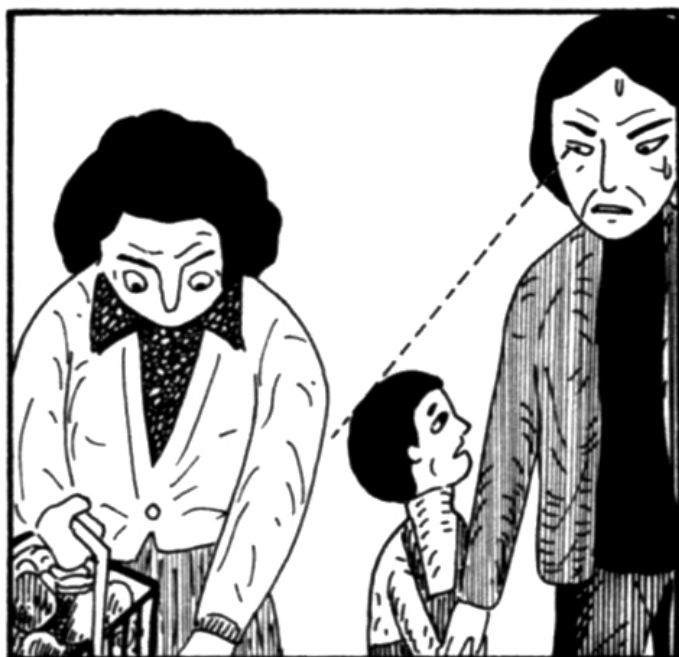




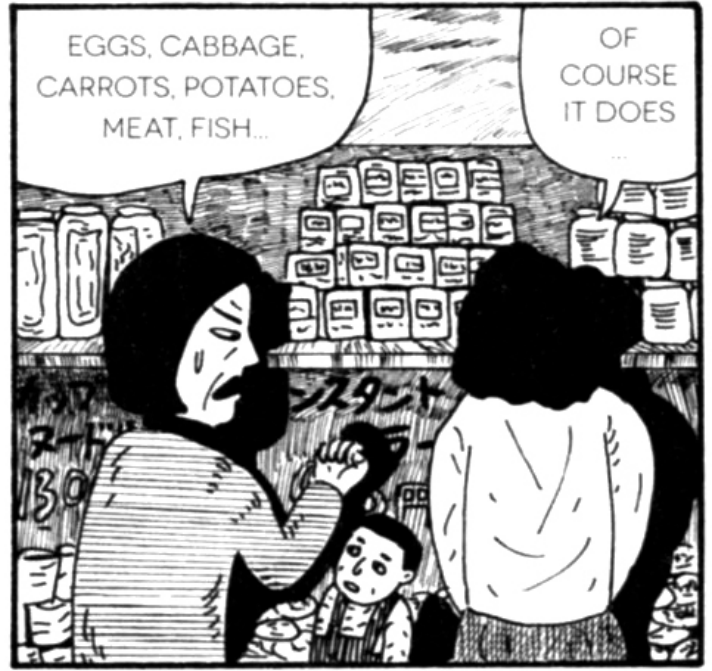


EBISU YOSHIKAZU





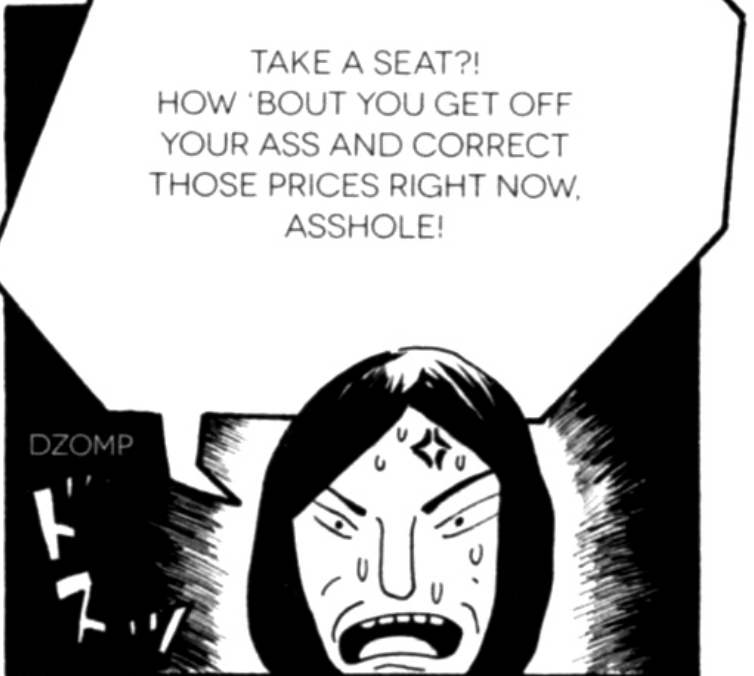
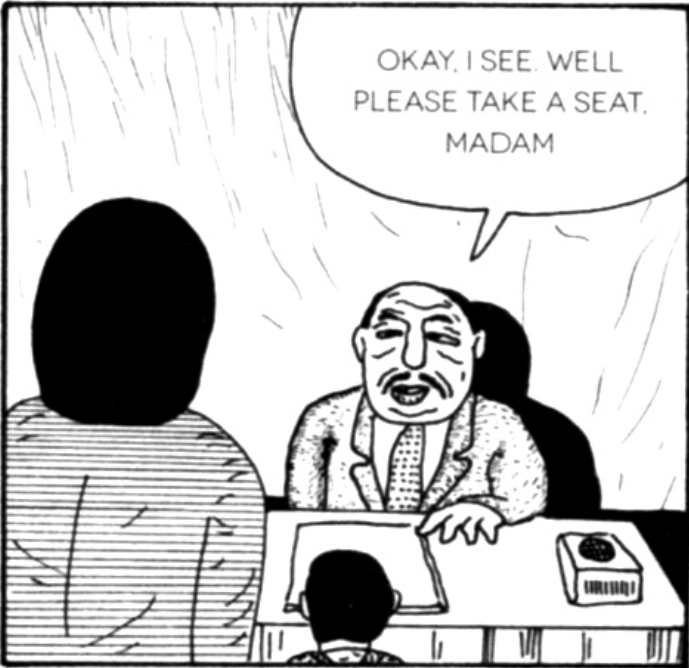






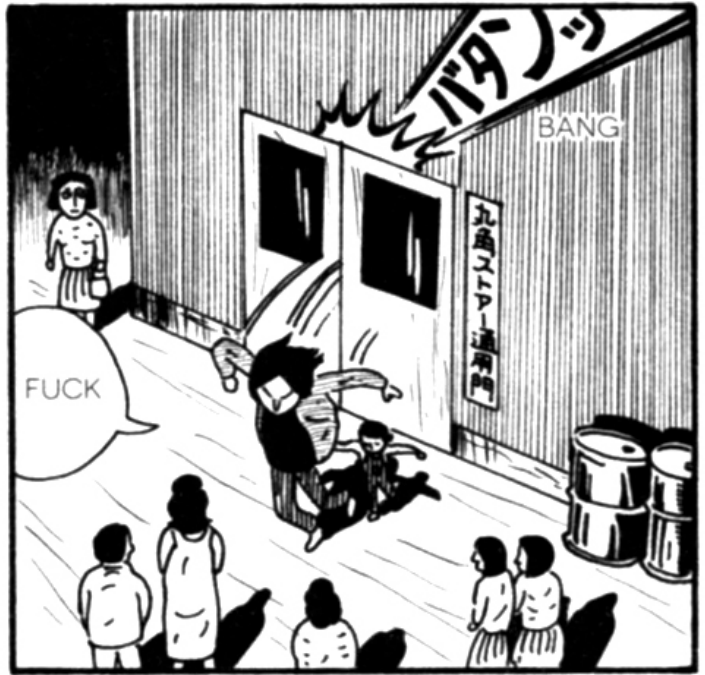
JACKET: MARUKAKU MARKET



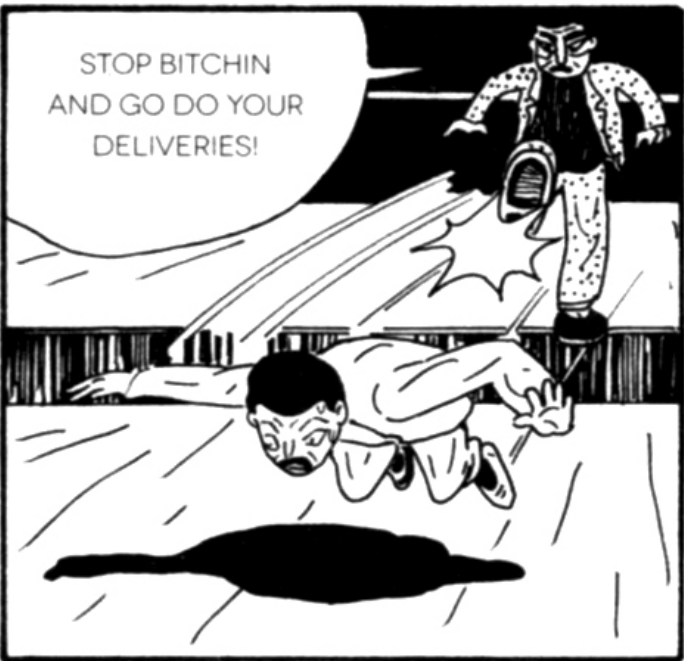
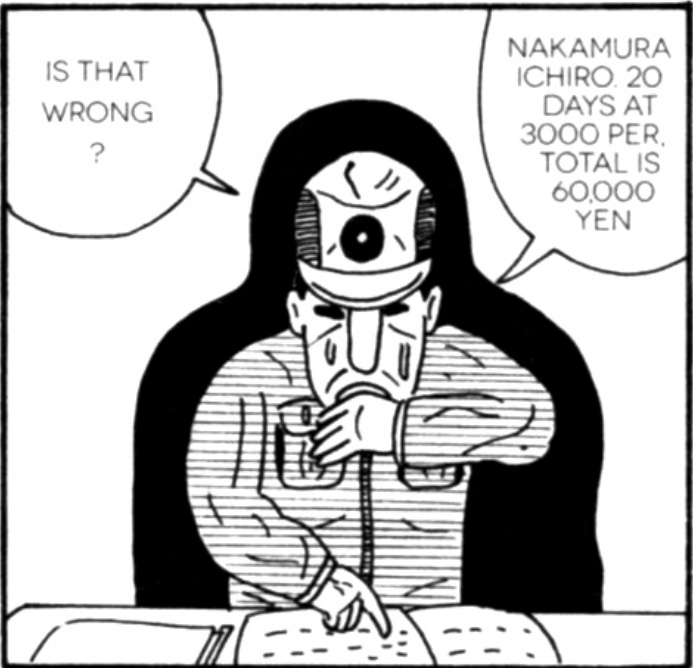


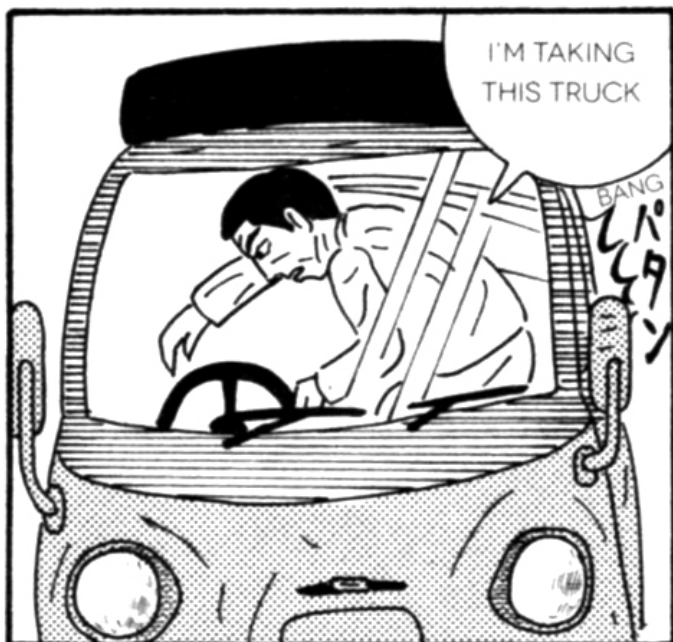
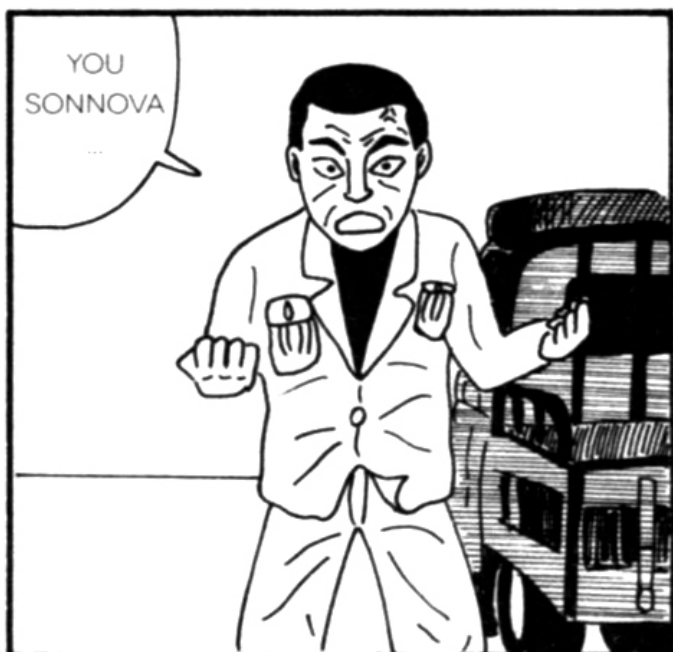




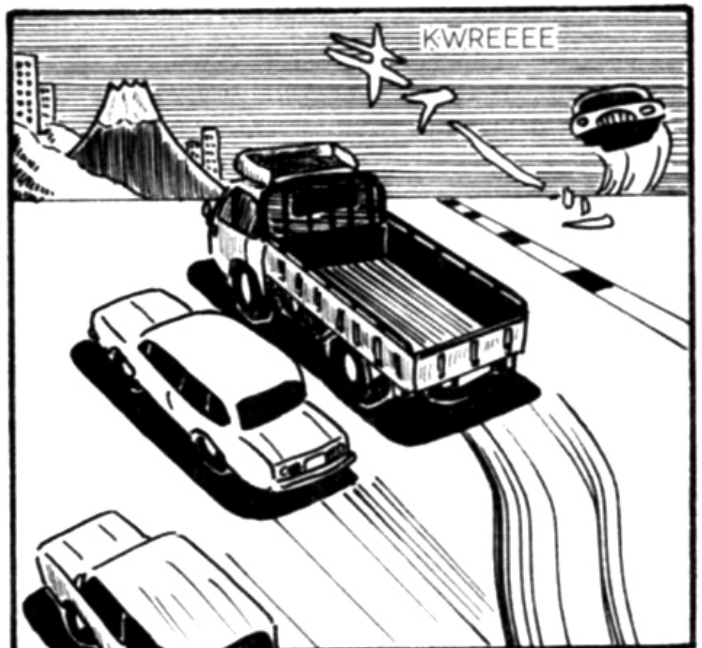
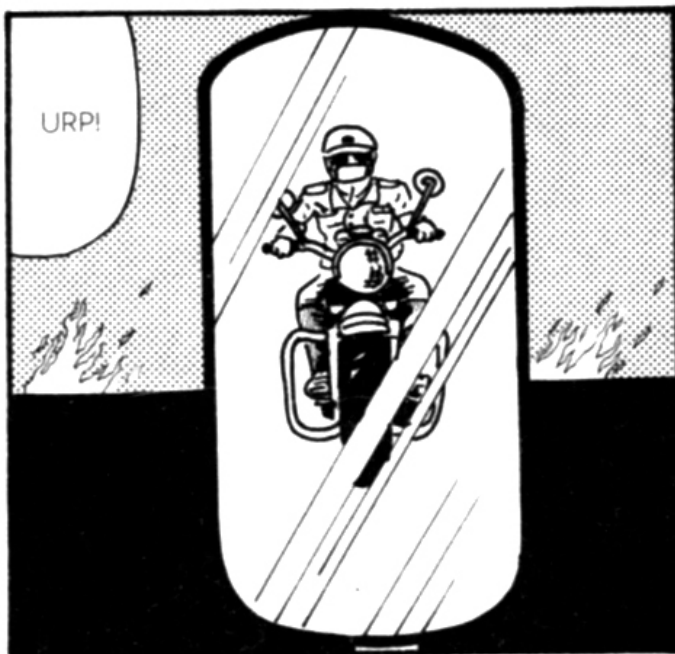
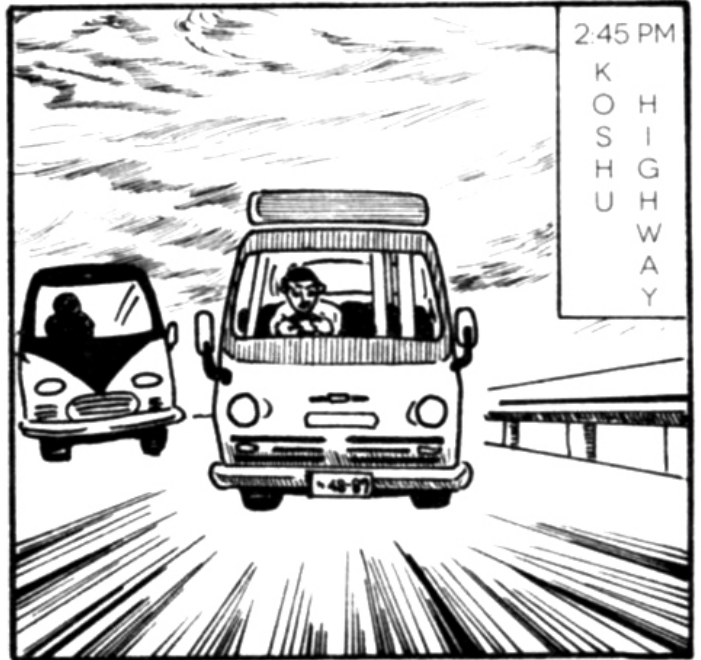


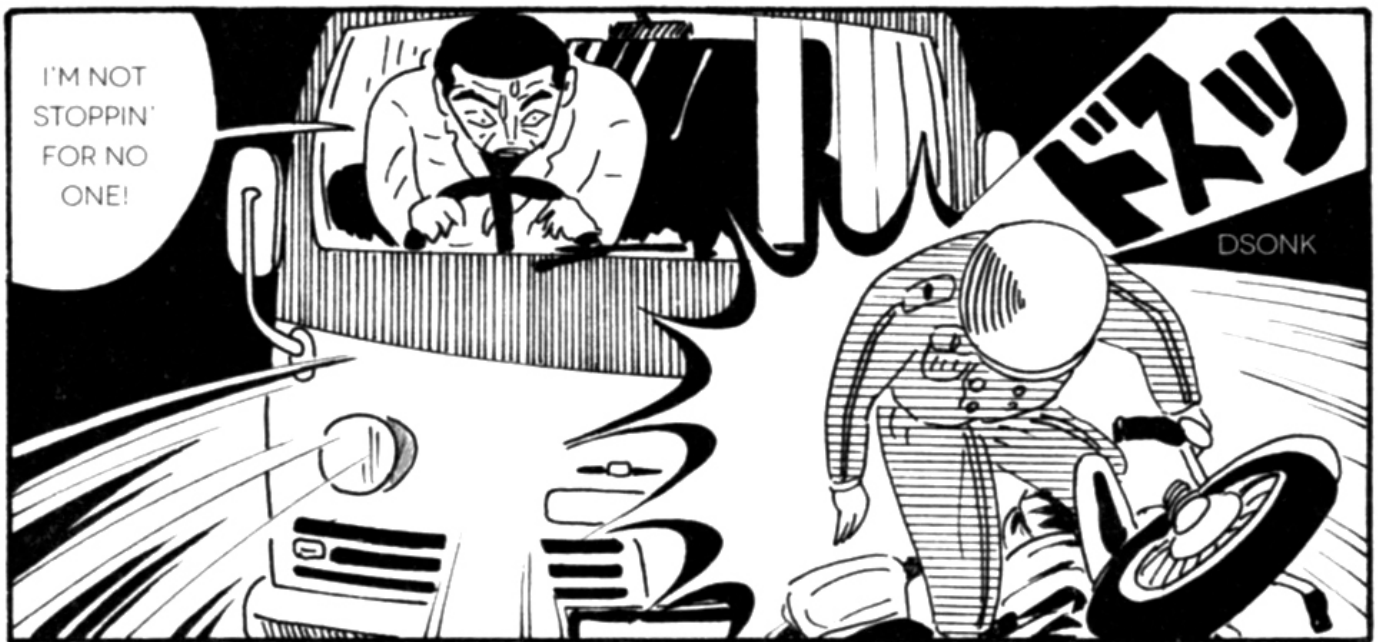
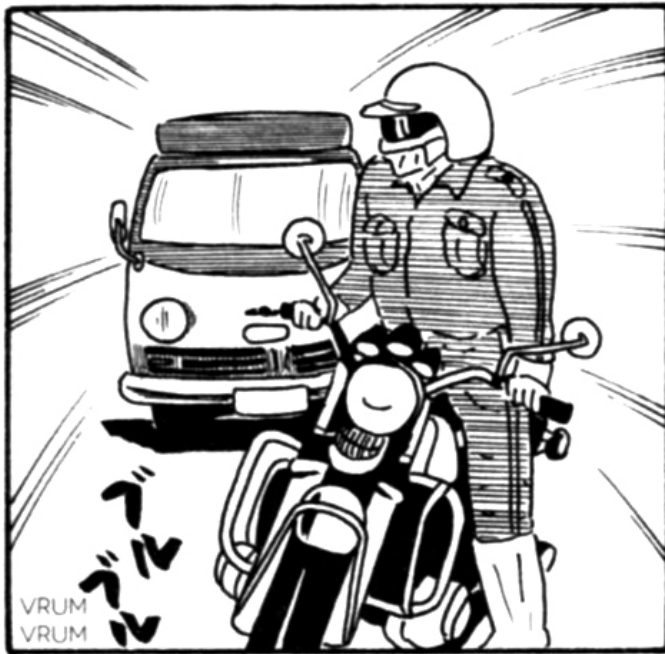
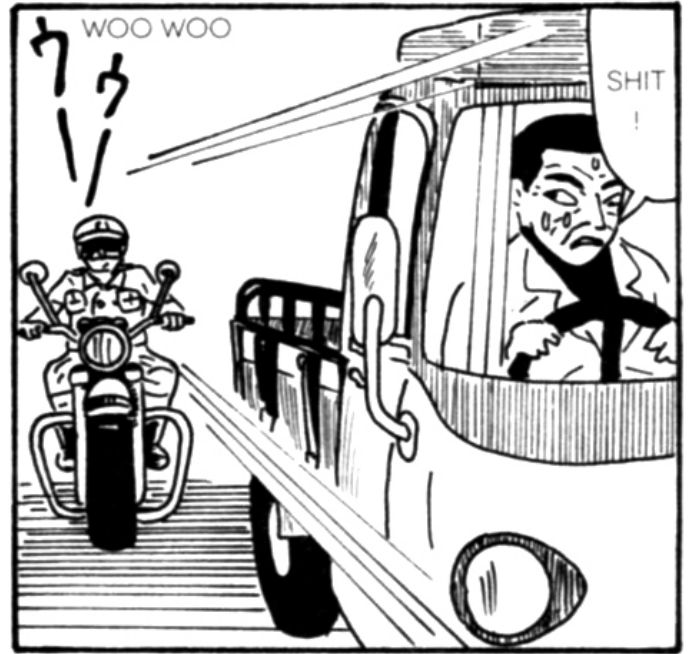
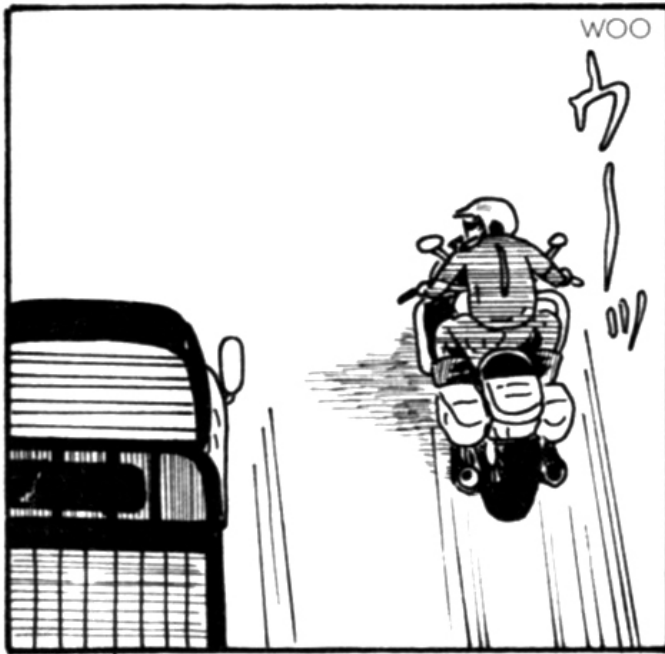


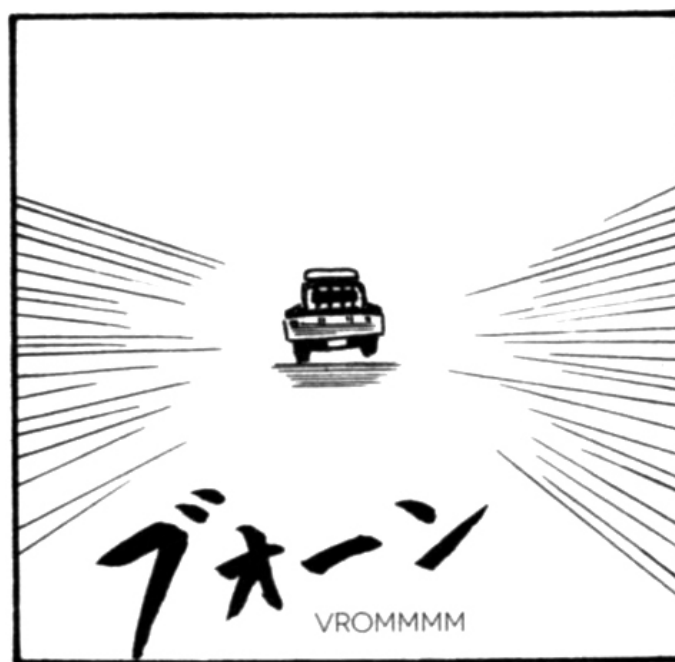
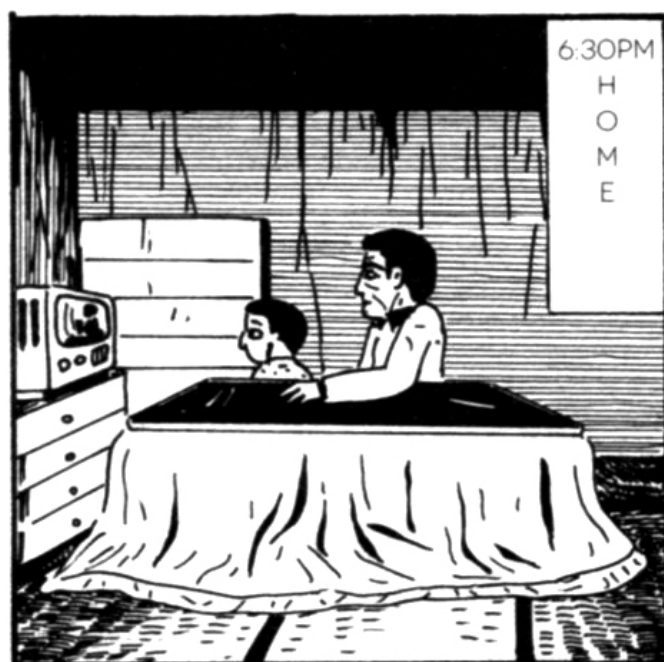
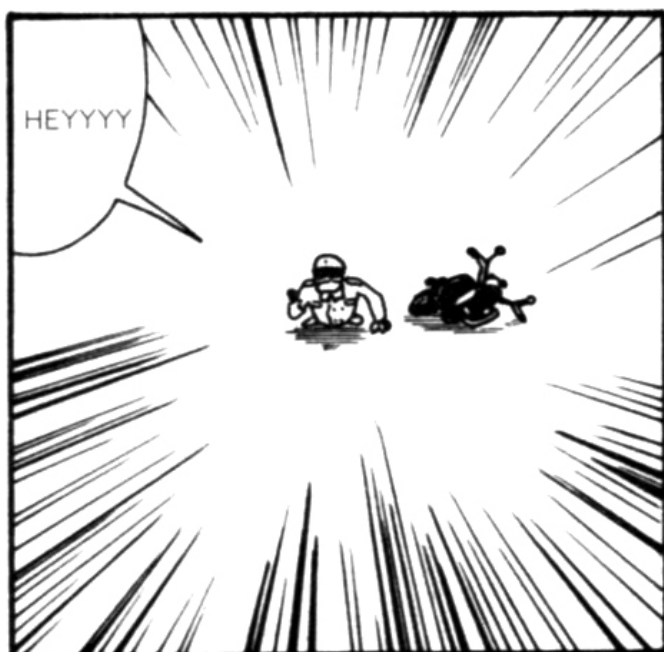


















INFLATION!  
EVER HEARD  
OF IT?

IF YOU WANT TO  
EAT PROPERLY,  
THEN BRING  
HOME A PROPER  
PAYCHECK!



YOU TRY  
GOING  
TO THE  
MARKET!

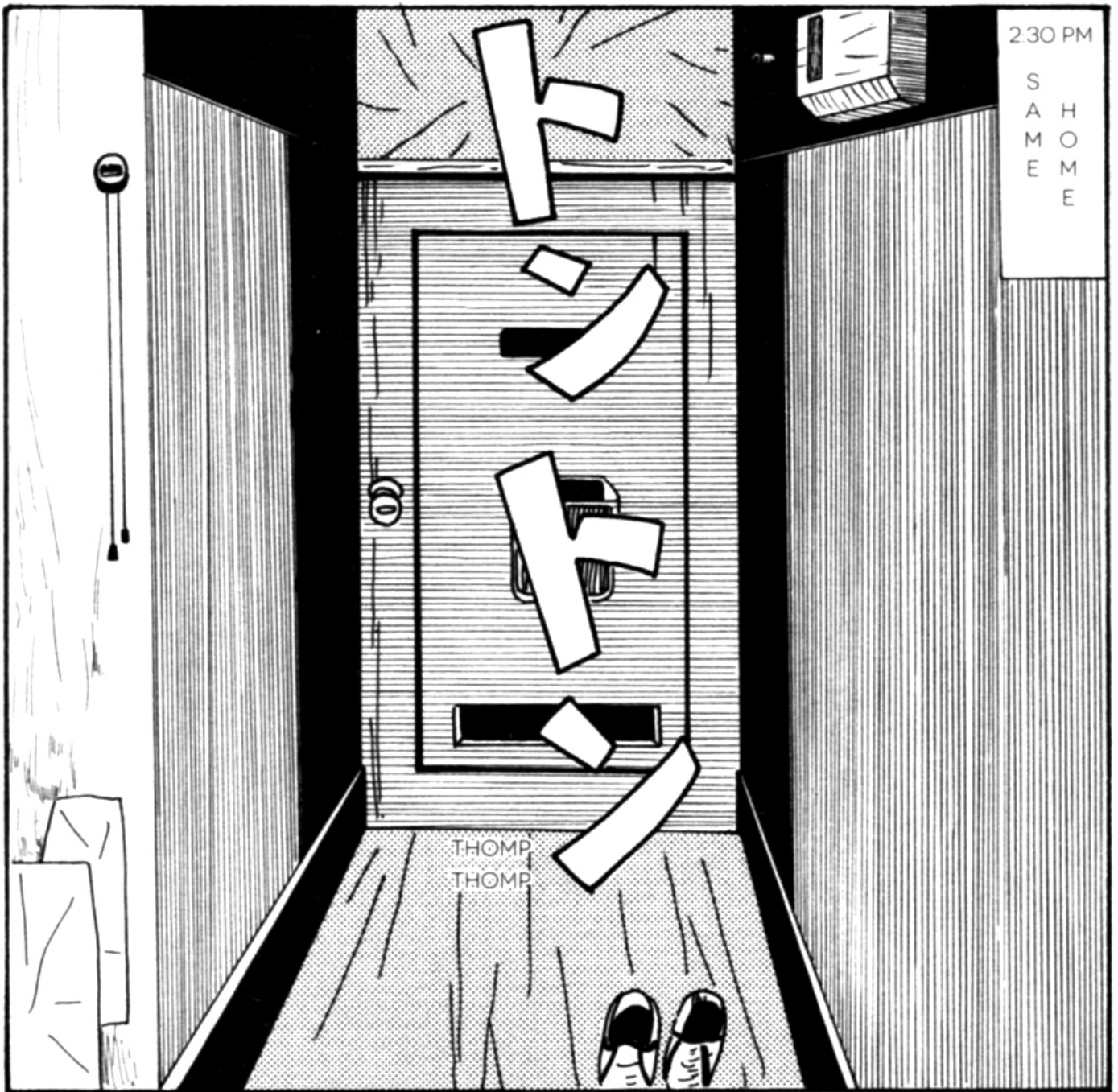
AND MILK AND  
FISH AND MEAT  
AND MISO AND  
SOY SAUCE!



THEN YOU'LL  
SEE HOW MUCH  
CABBAGE AND  
CARROTS AND  
ONIONS COST!

WHY  
DON'T  
YOU TRY  
SHOPPING  
FOR  
ONCE?!

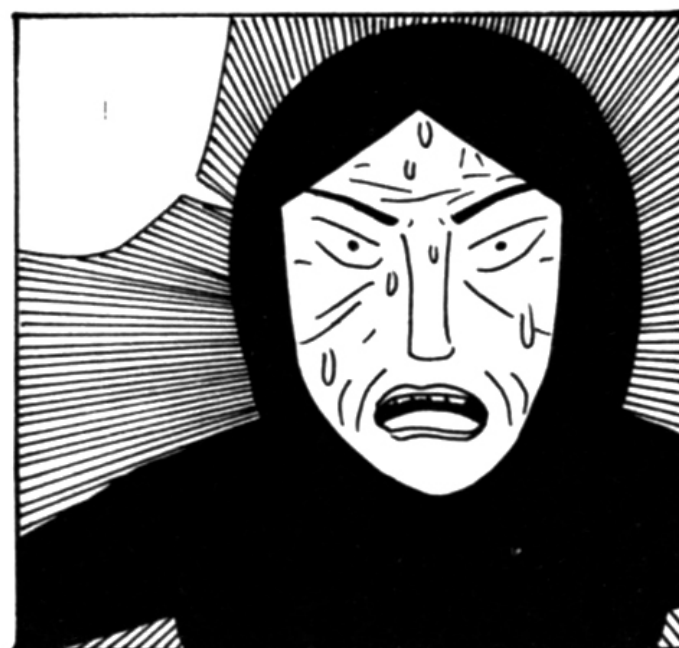




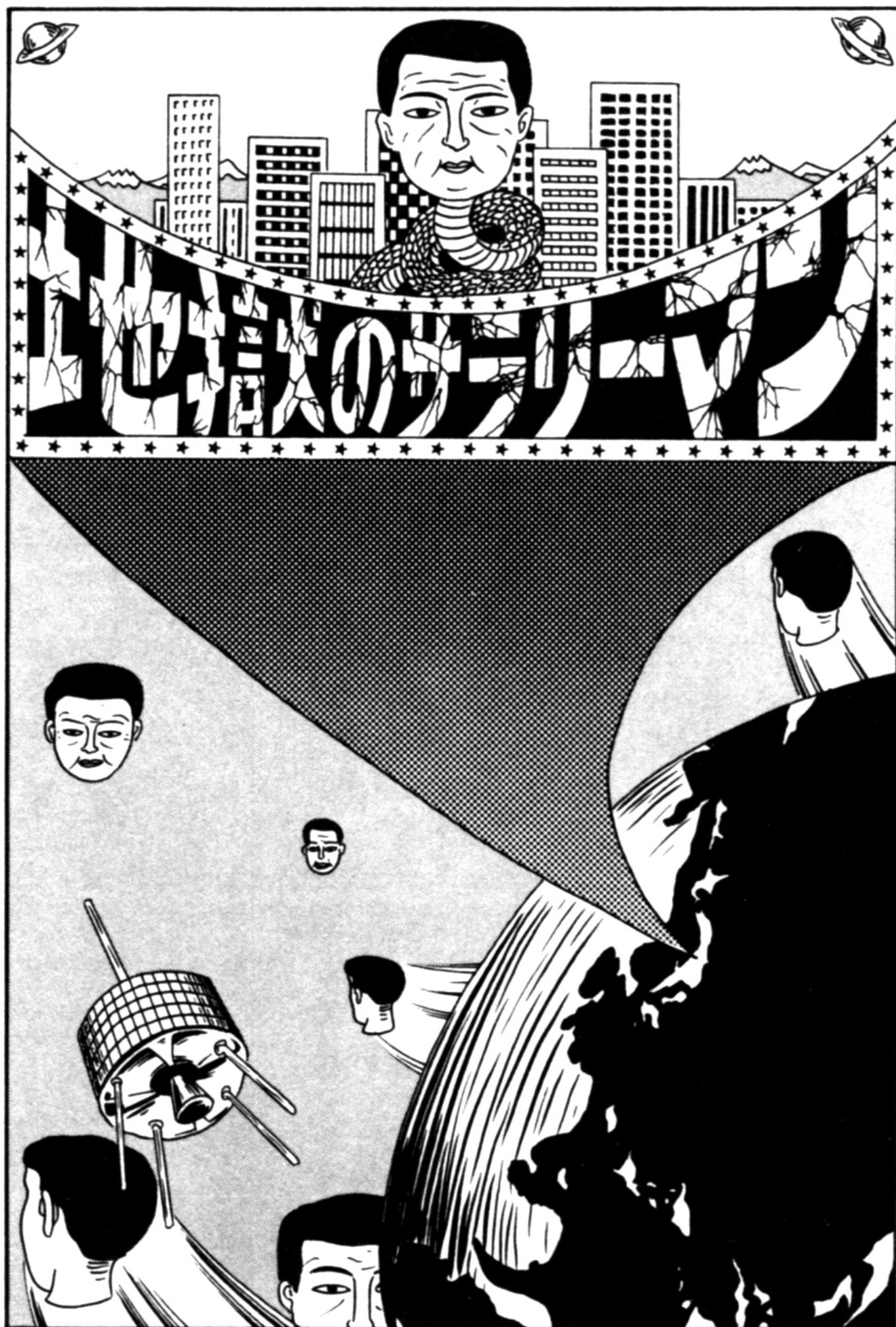














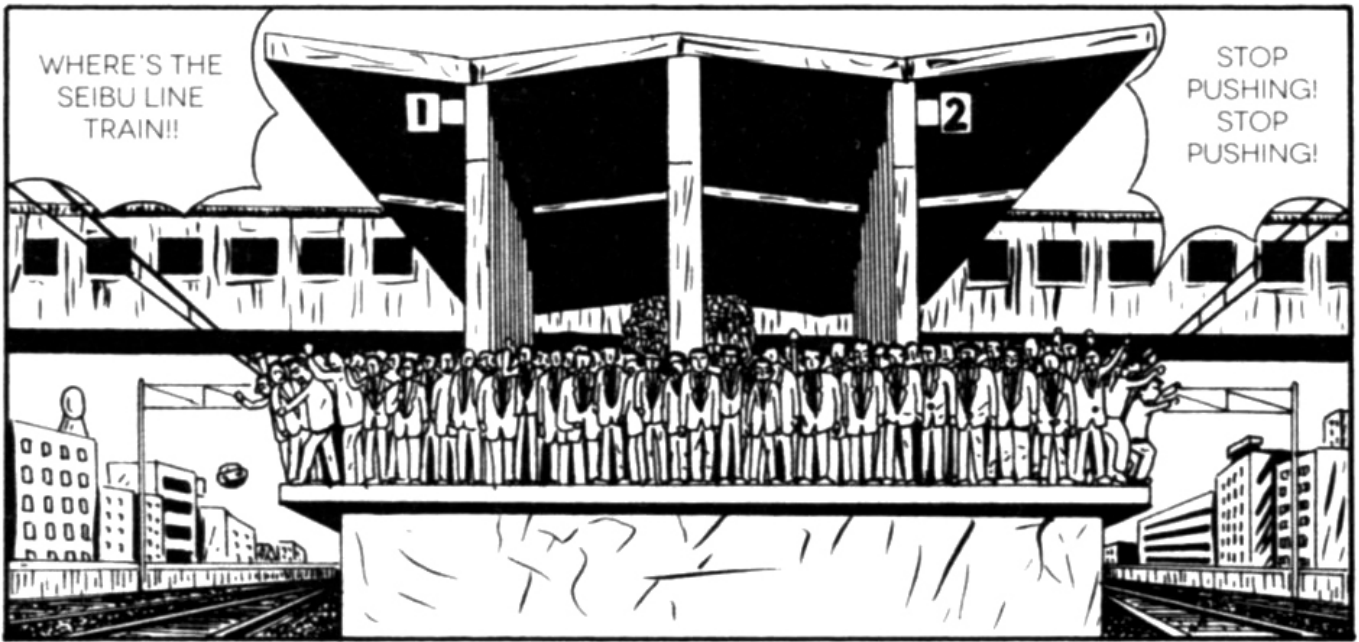


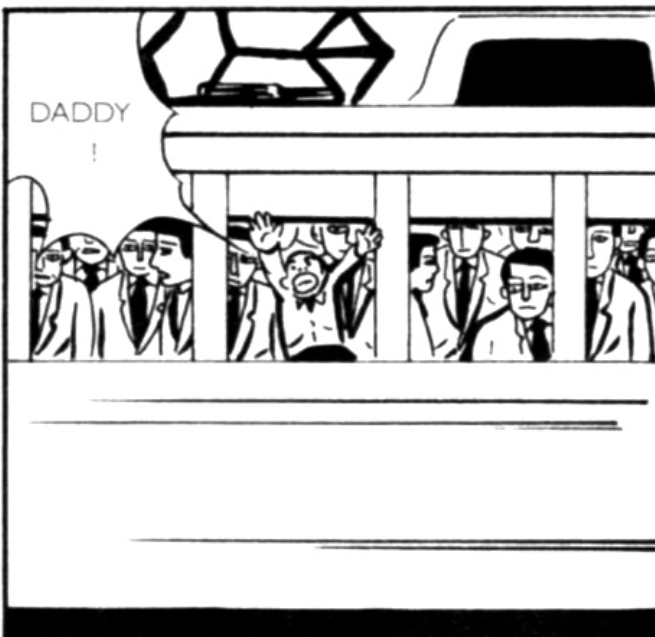
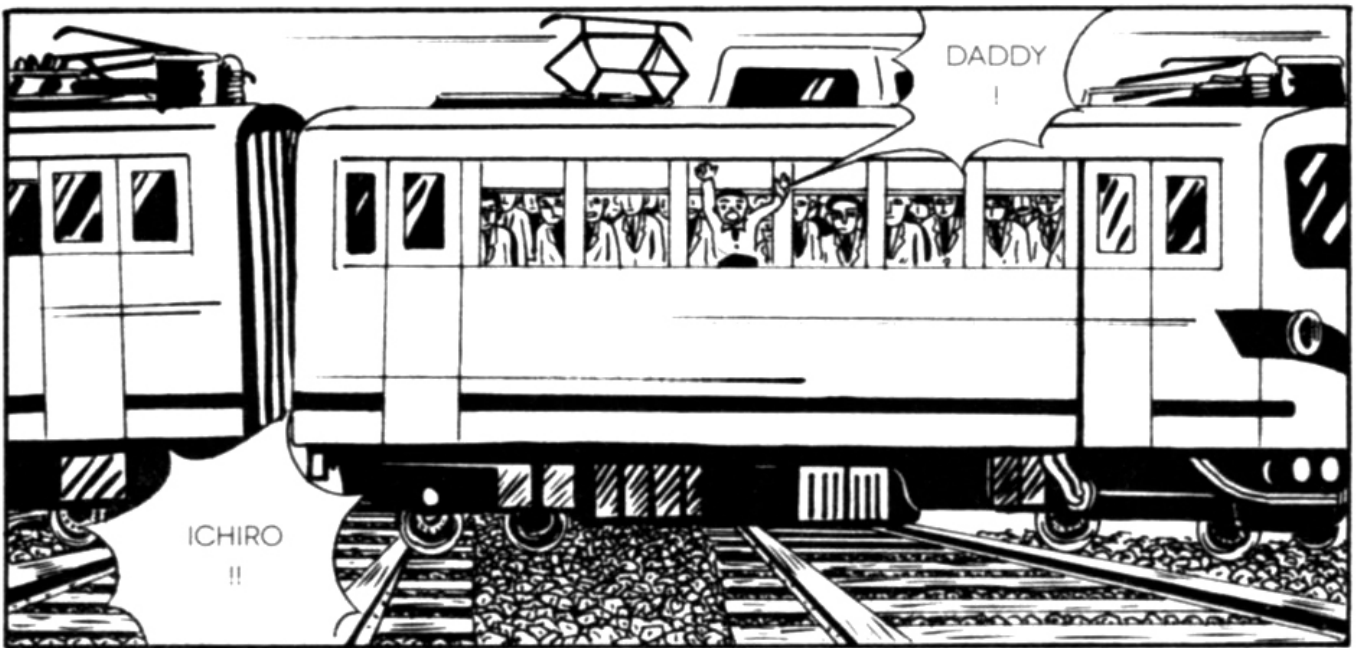


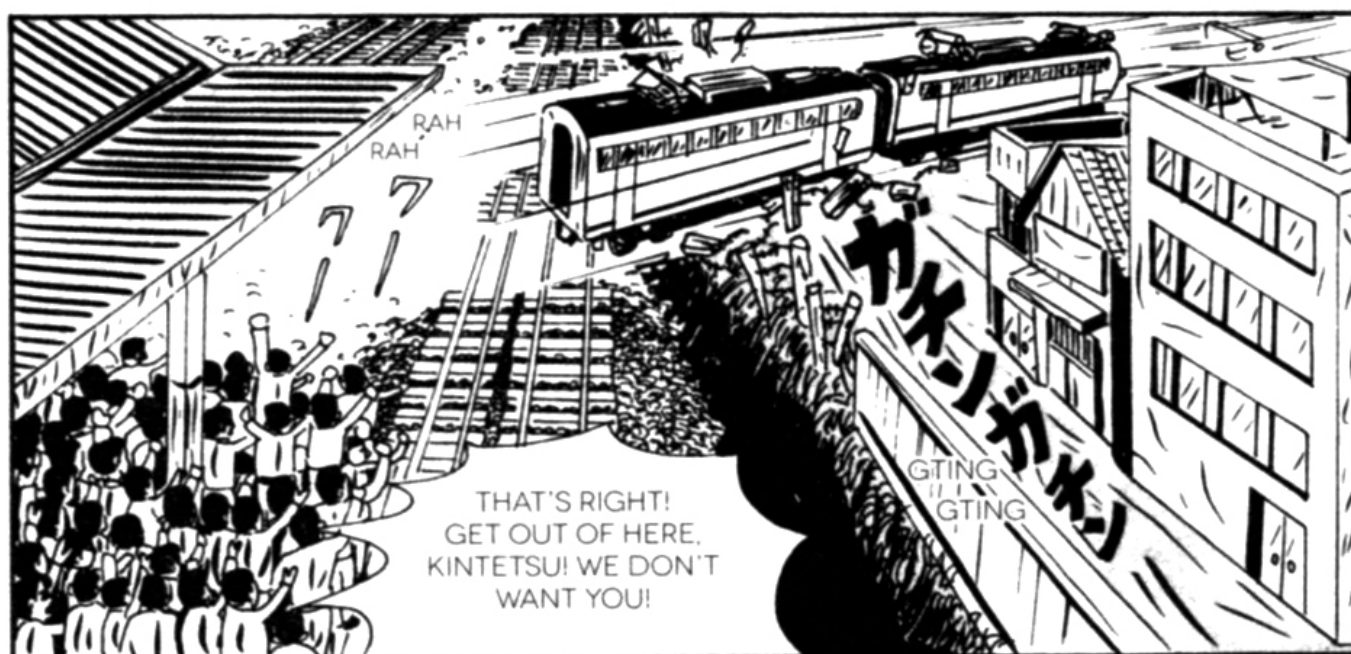
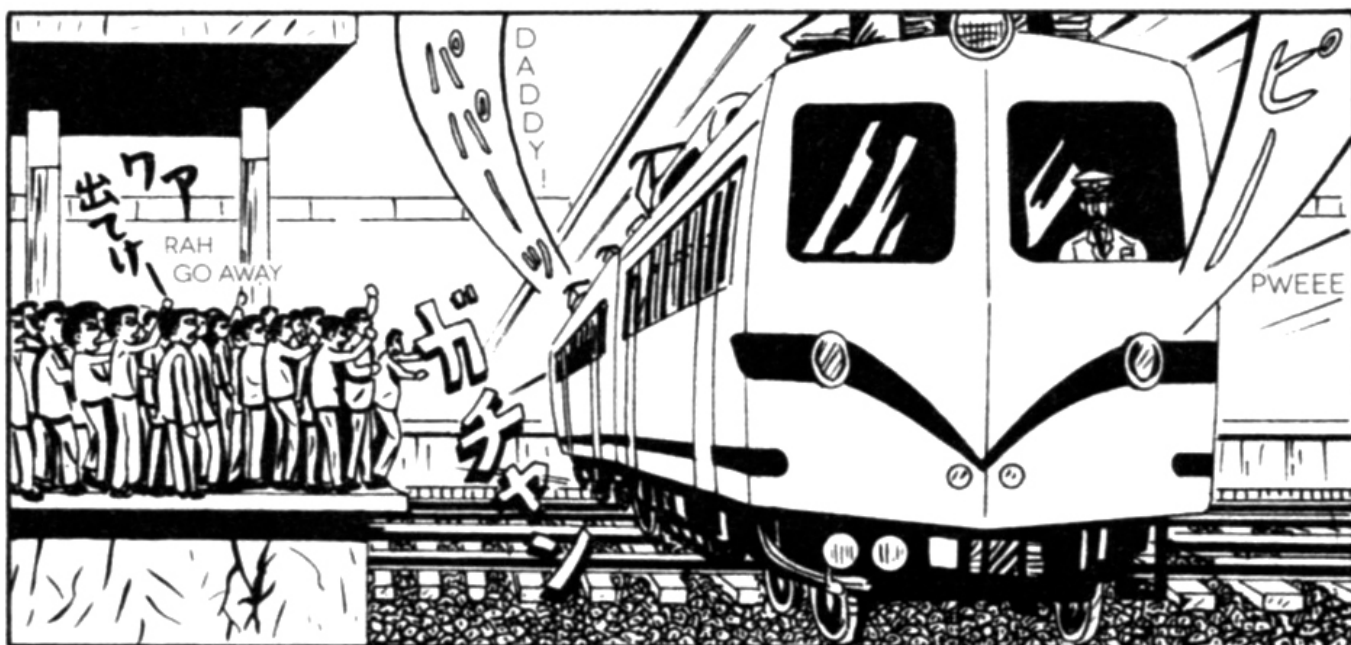


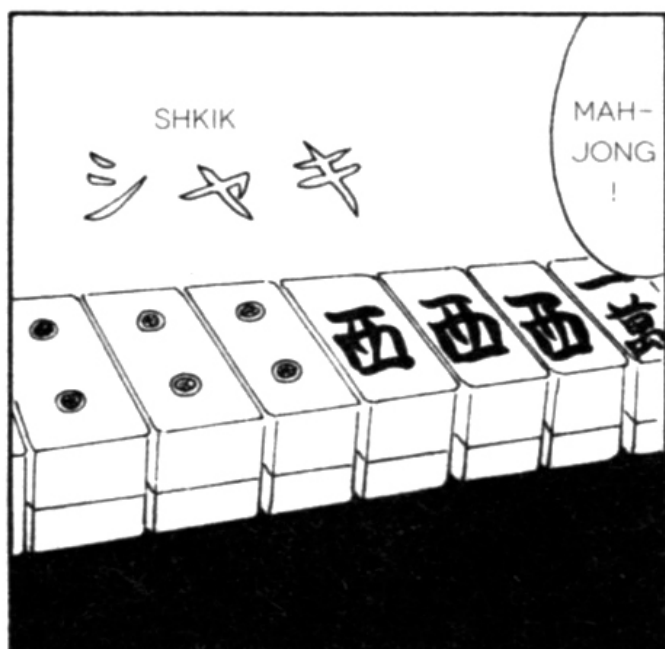






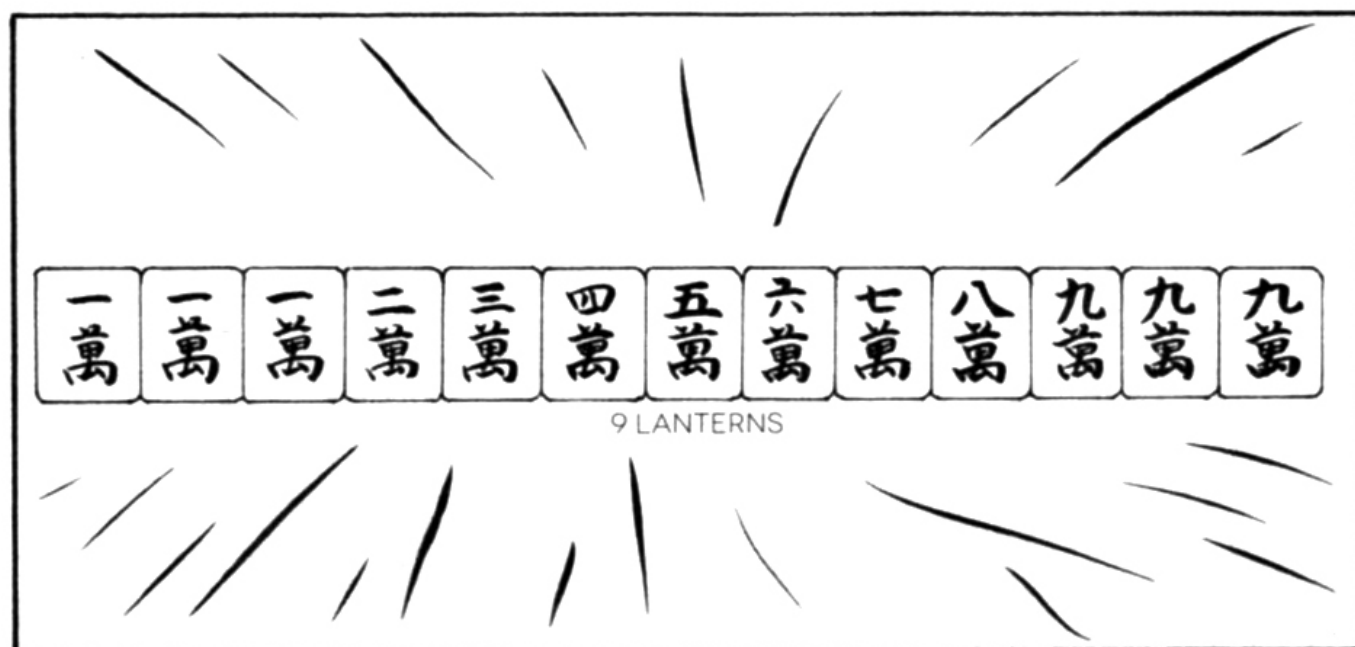




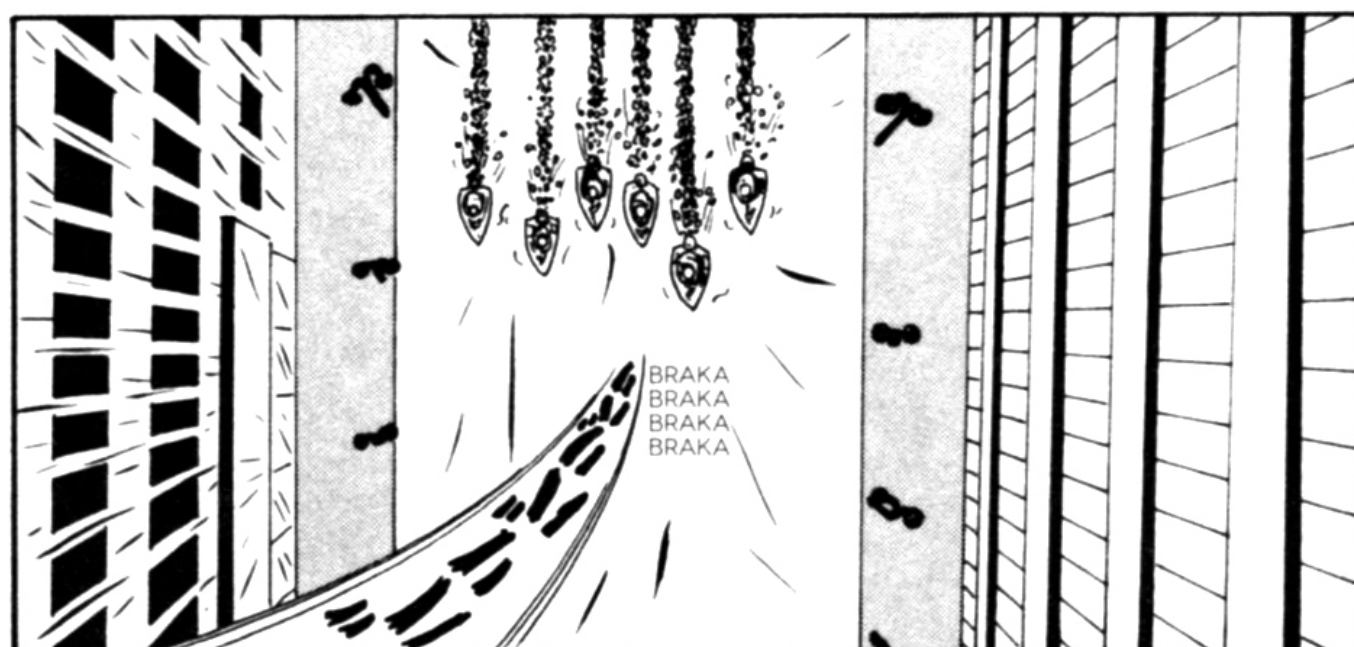
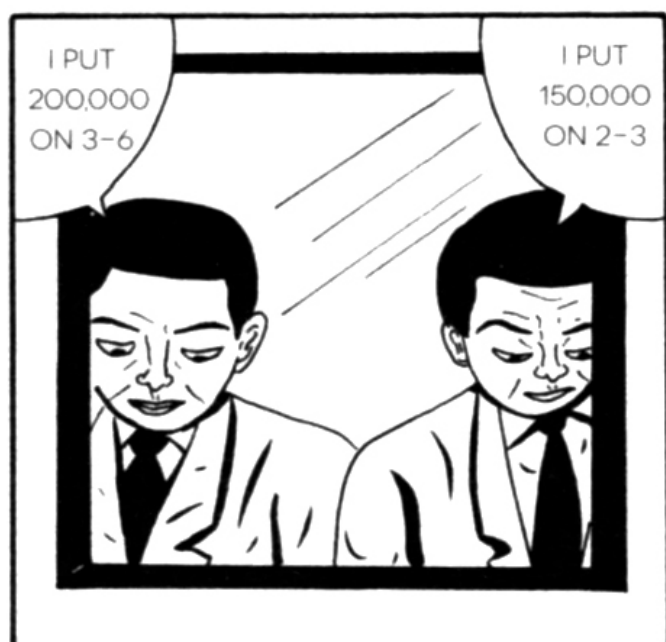
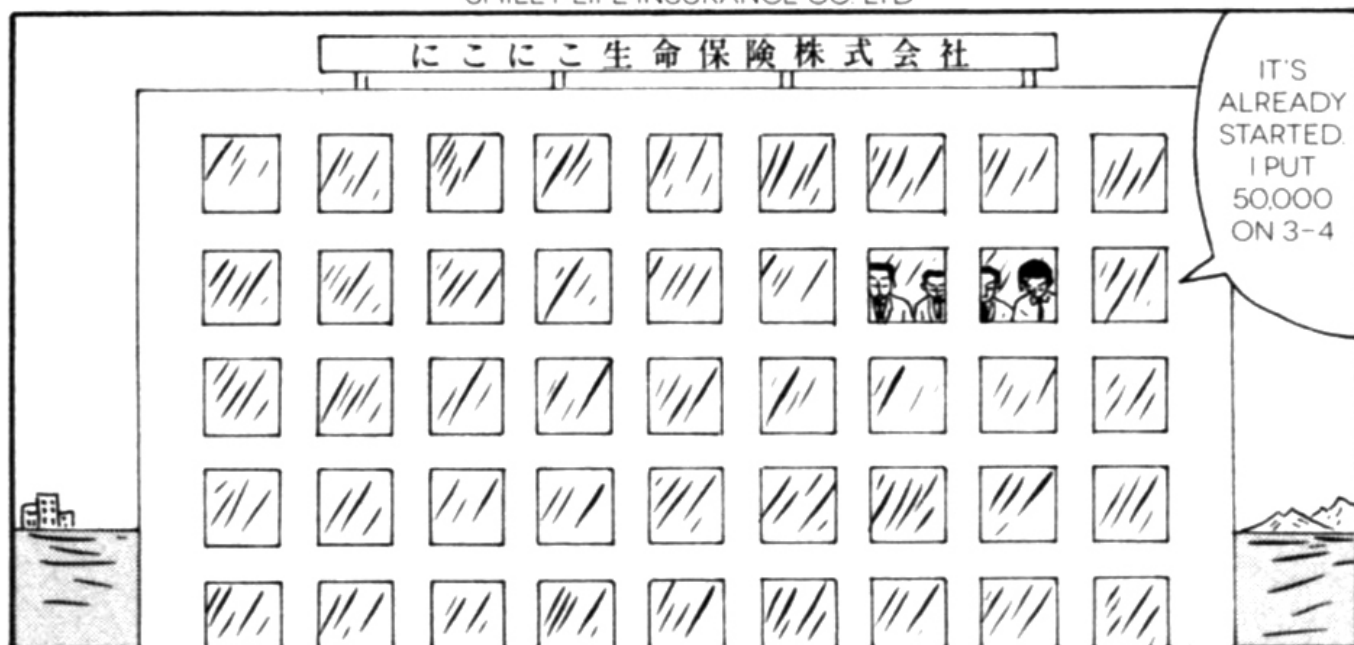




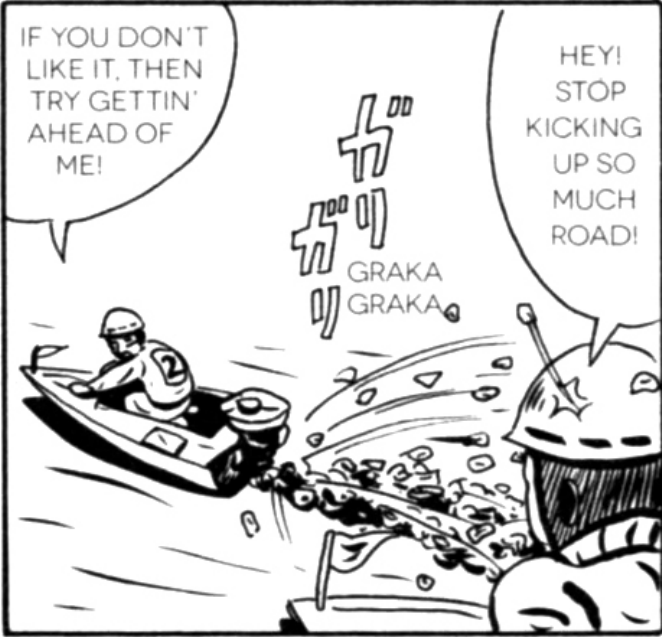
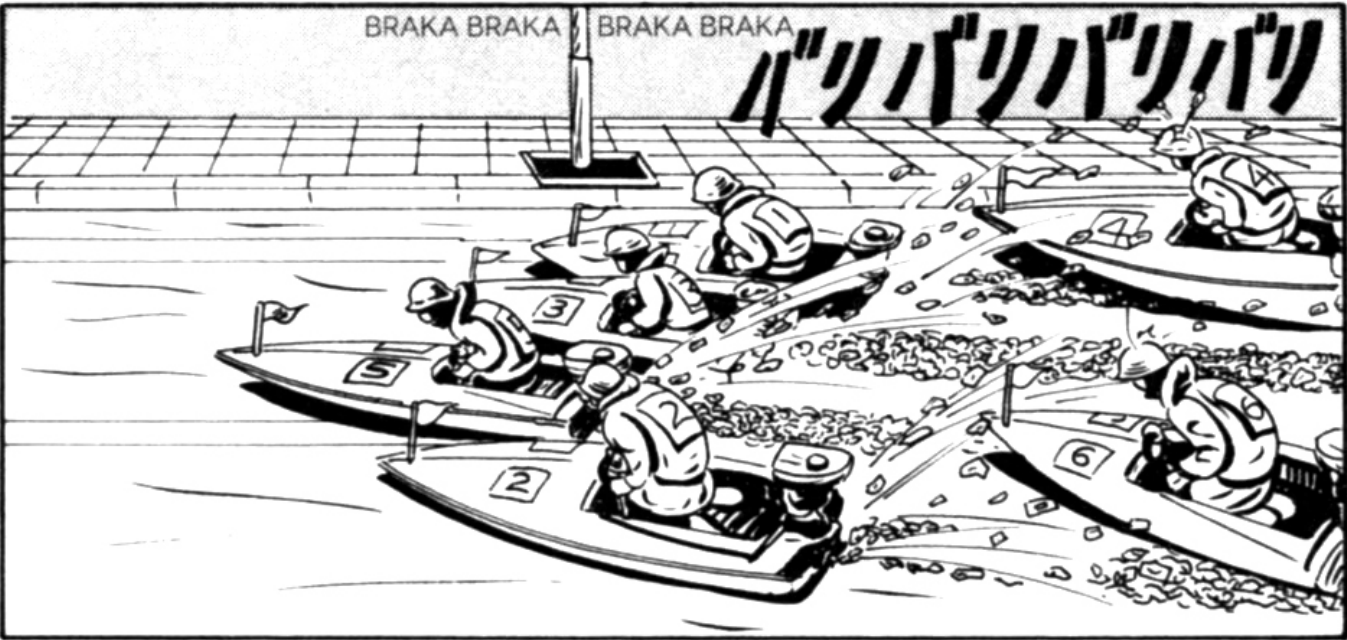


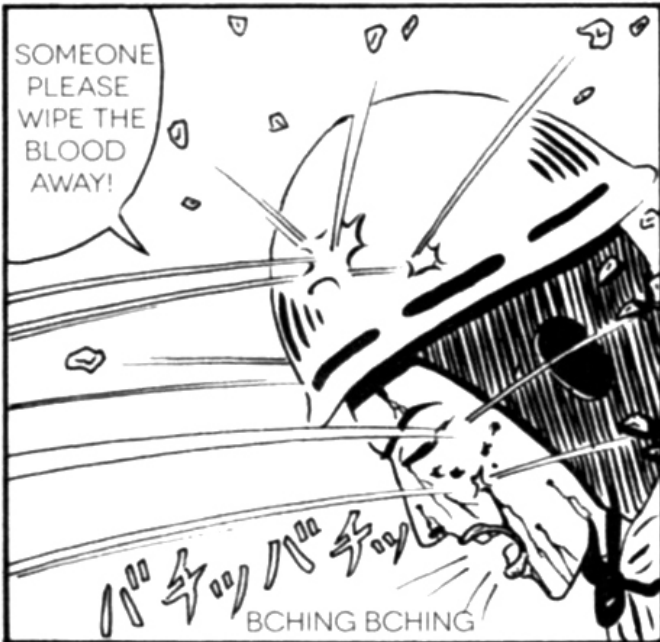


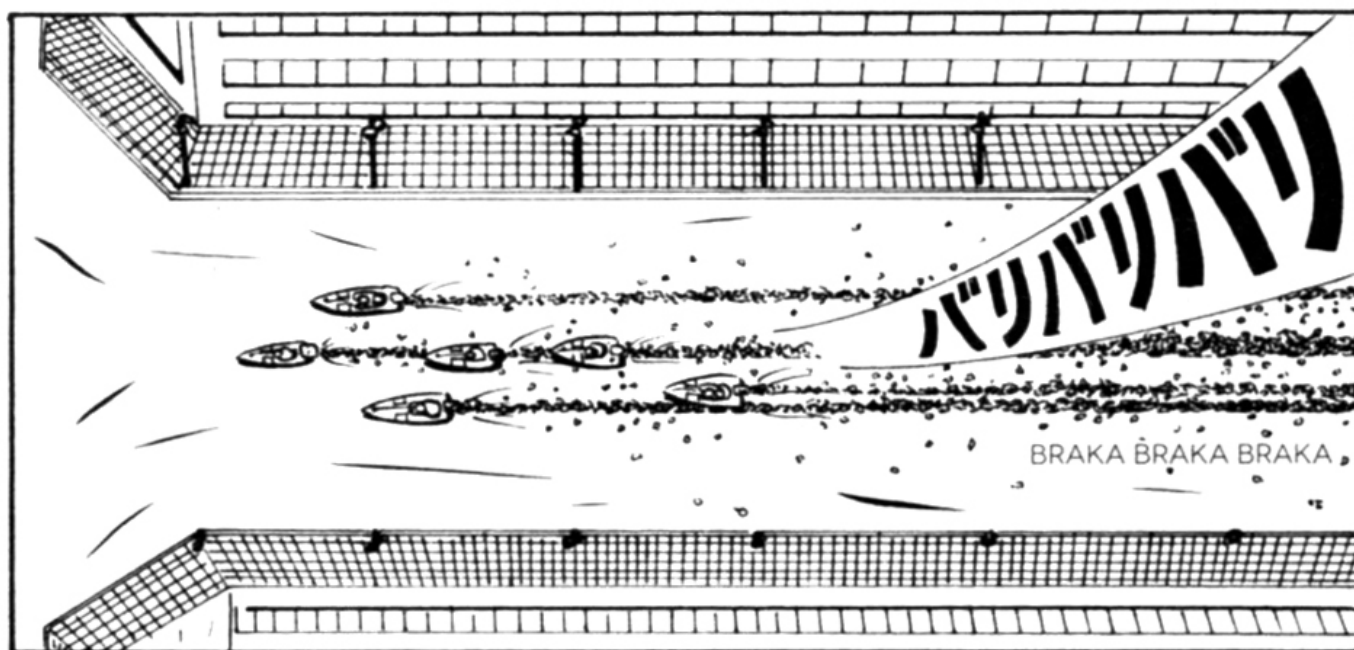






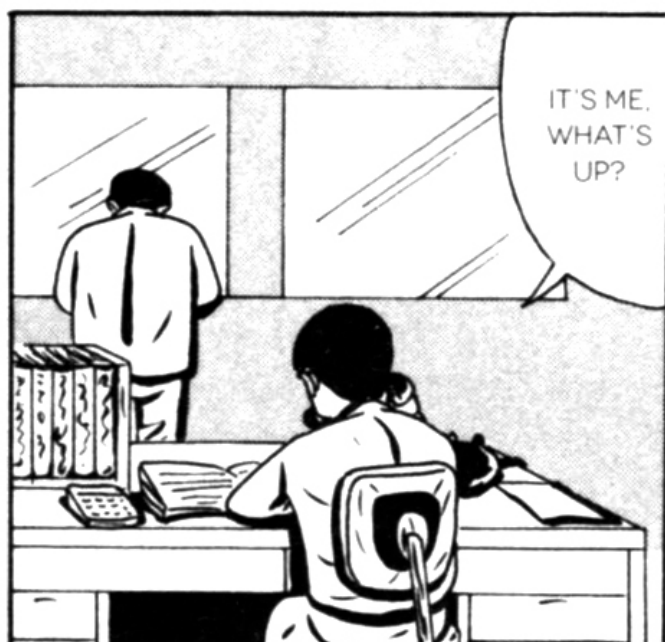




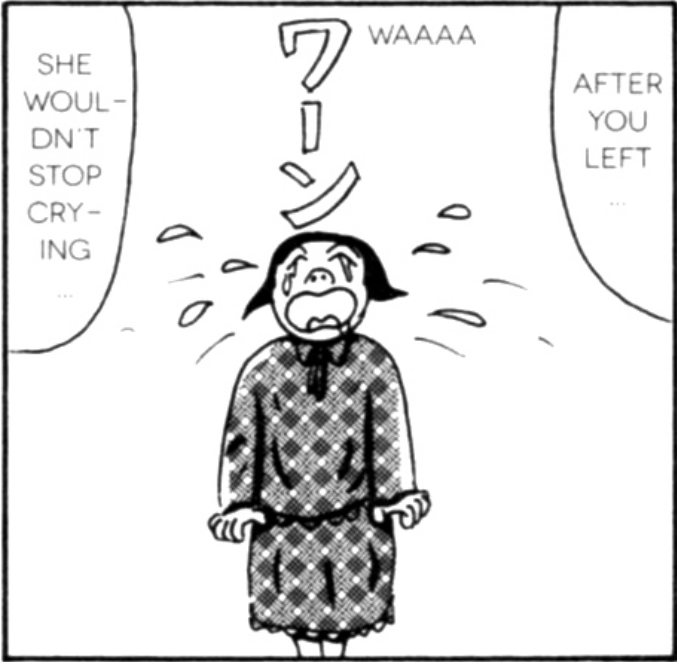


THE WORLD IS A FAMILY WE ARE ALL BROTHERS AND SISTERS

# 世界は一家・人類みな兄弟







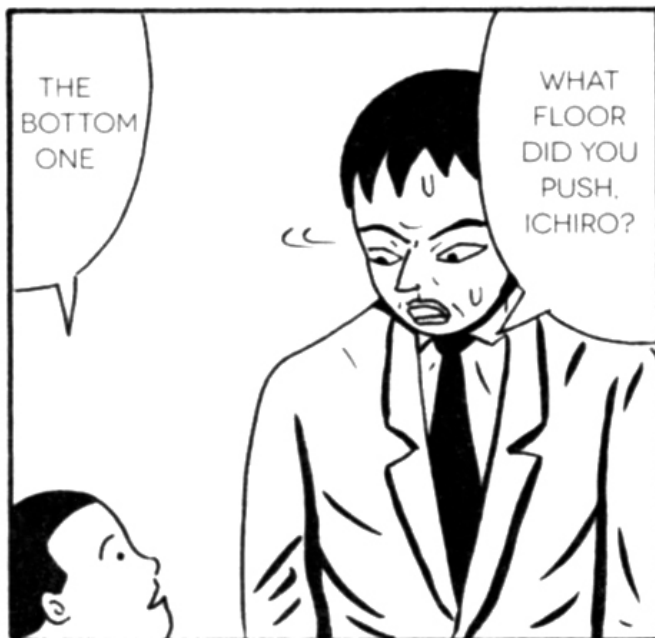
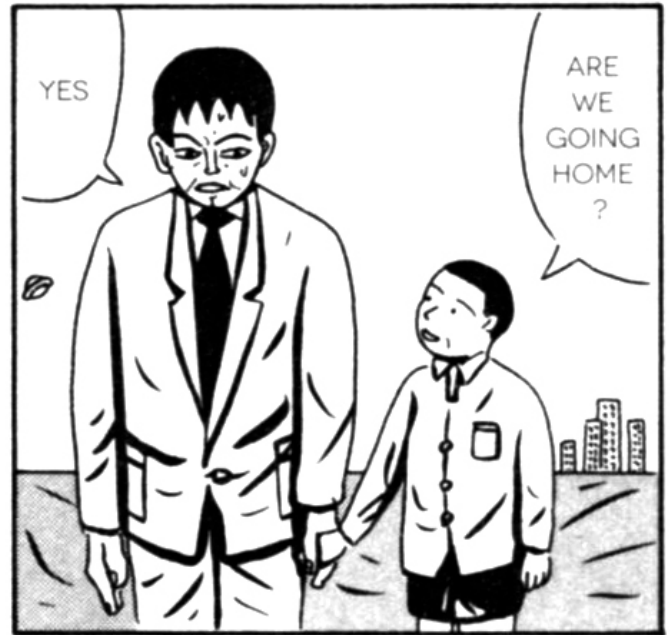
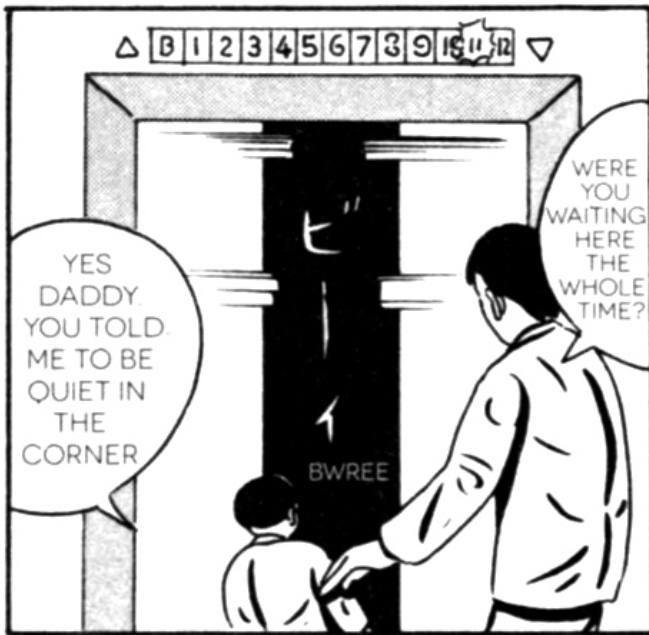


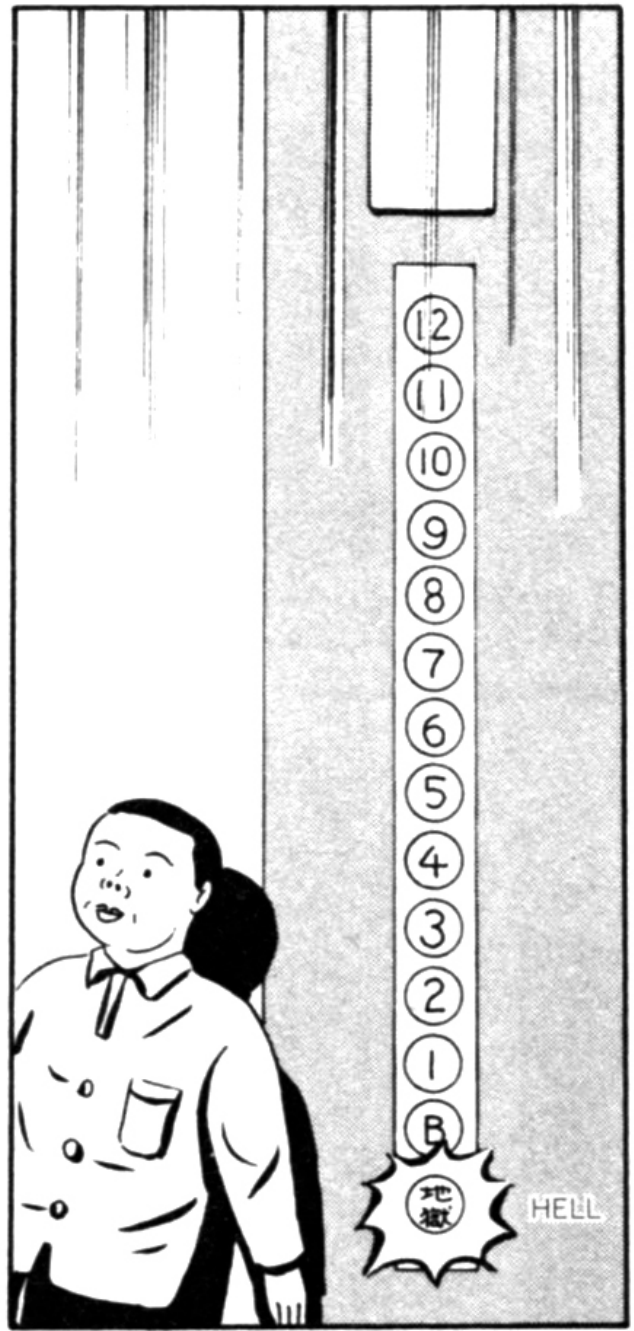


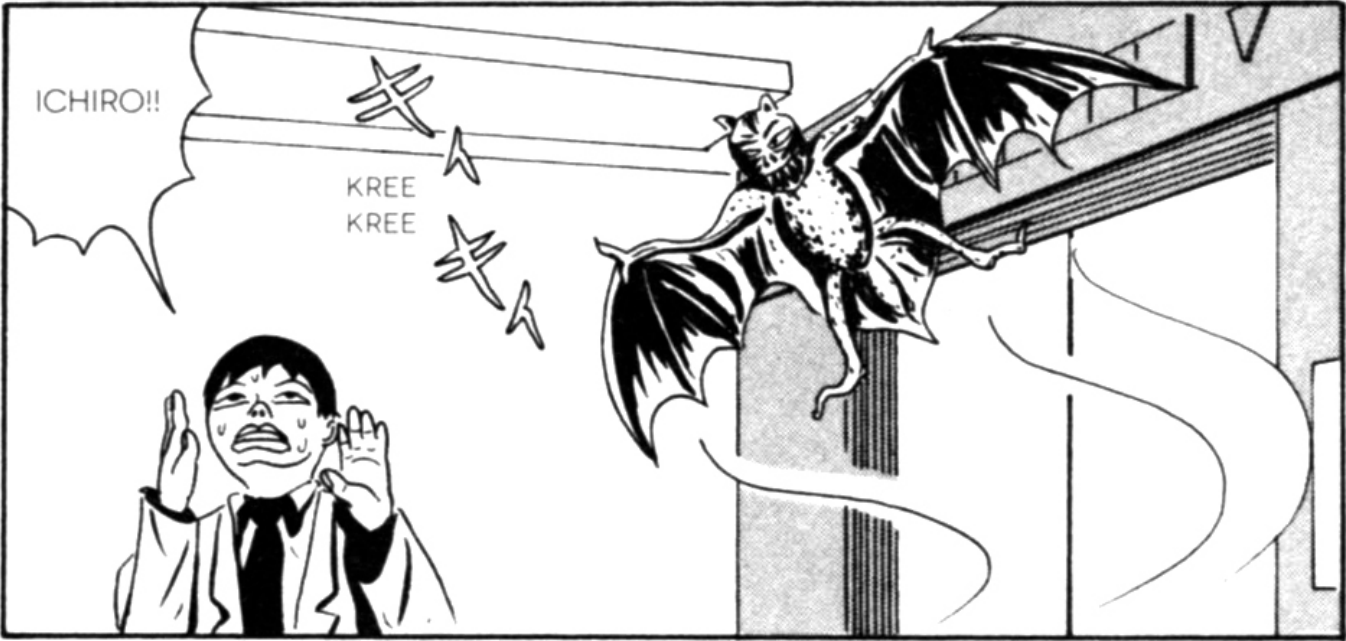






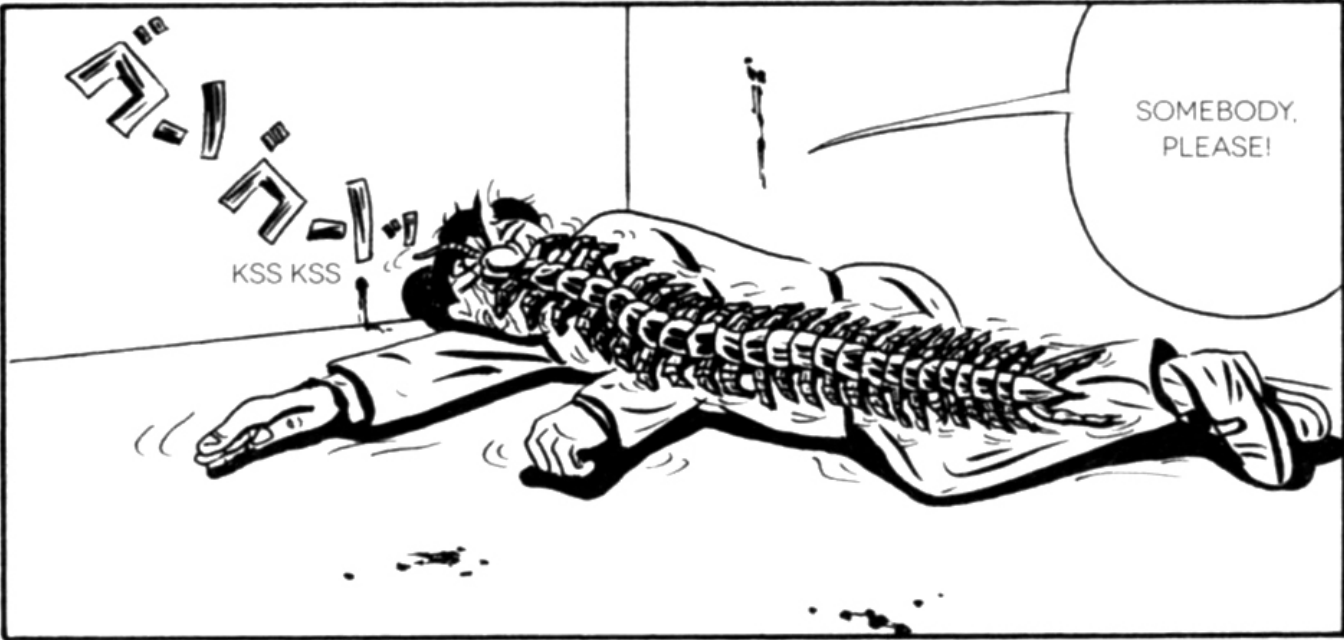












AND DOWN THE ELEVATOR WENT: B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B6, B7, B8... ALL THE WAY TO HELL



GWRRRRROM



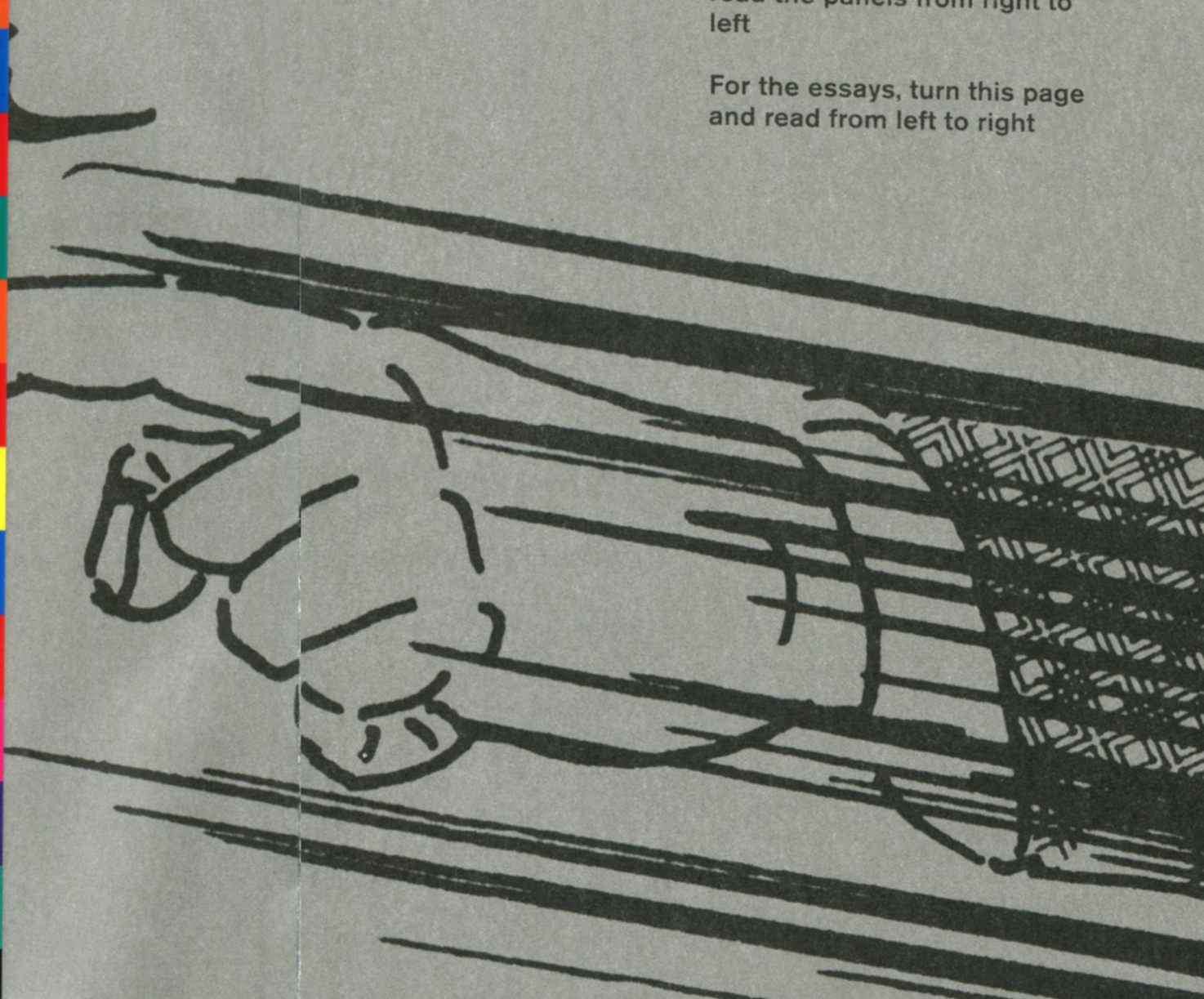


**breakdownpress**



For the manga, begin at the  
other side of the book and  
read the panels from right to  
left

For the essays, turn this page  
and read from left to right







**FINALLY PUBLISHED!! THE HORRIBLY  
INFAMOUS MOST RIDICULOUS WORK  
IN THE HISTORY OF MANGA!!**